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May 1993
Number 33

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Saving the World
John P. Sisk

Sex and the Single Life
Philip Turner

St. Evelyn Waugh
George Weigel

The World's Oldest Virtue
Judith Martin

The Skimpole Syndrome: Childhood Unlimited
Paul V. Mankowski

Opinions and Reviews: Midge Decter on National Service
Against Peer Fear • The Newtape File III • Phillip E. Johnson
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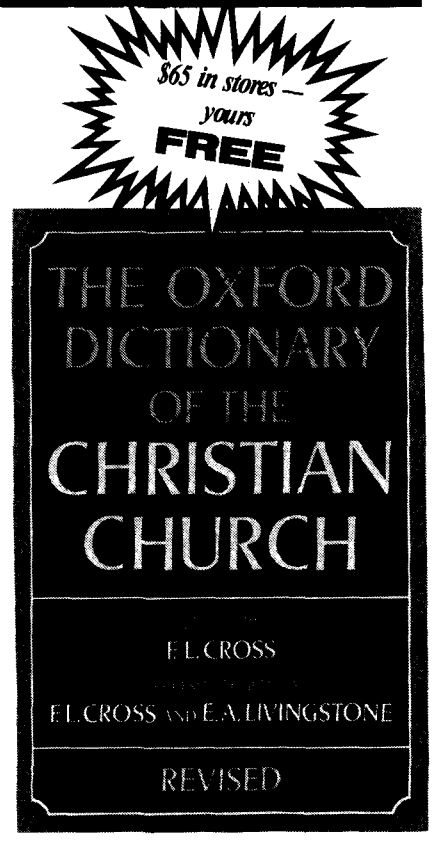

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

MAY 1993 • NUMBER 33

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Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
Editor: *James Nuechterlein*
Managing Editor: *Matthew Berke*
Poetry Editor: *Jill P. Baumgaertner*
Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Service: *Publishing Management Associates*

FIRST THINGS: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $24 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to FIRST THINGS, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, OH 44870. Copyright © 1993 by The Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved. Produced in the USA.

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Gays on Parade?

In his article "Homosexuality in Uniform: Is It Time?" (February), Eugene T. Gomulka would have been better off arguing his point from a pure theological/moral basis instead of relying on the same old myths concerning gay men and women that society is slowly rejecting as superstition and hateful rhetoric. Gomulka's blatant misuse of "statistics" shows his ineptness at spinning the results of psychological and sociological studies to buttress his position. While it is old hat for activists on any side of an issue to present numbers that support their cause, I would think that people who believe in the moral superiority of their ethic would not need to resort to misinformation to present their side of an issue.

As an example of such misinformation, when referring to Alfred Kinsey's 1948 study, Gomulka quotes Kinsey's conclusion that "10 percent of the males are more or less exclusively homosexual for at least three years between the ages 16 and 55." Gomulka continues with the following statement: "On the same page, however, Kinsey states that '4 percent of the white males are exclusively homosexual throughout their lives after adolescence.' For political reasons gay activists prefer to quote the 10 percent over the 4 percent statistic." In fact, Kinsey never addressed the issue of homosexuality as an either/or proposition. Rather, Kinsey placed sexuality on a continuum of 0 to 6, with 0 being exclusively heterosexual and 6 being exclusively homosexual. The 10 percent figure Gomulka first quotes was for men deemed a 5 on the continuum; the 4 percent figure was for men deemed a 6 on the continuum. The figures are not mutually exclusive as Gomulka would lead you to believe. In actuality the percentage of men in Kinsey's study whom society would consider to be homosexual (i.e., those men deemed a 5 or 6 on the continuum) is 14 percent. The gay community prefers the lower, 10 percent figure to account for error in Kinsey's study.

In the end Gomulka and similar-minded people will fail in their efforts . . . [and] truth and reason will ultimately prevail. There is substantial, sound evidence that counters Gomulka's contorted statistics and a host of witnesses—homosexual, heterosexual, military, nonmilitary, religious, and unreligious—who will refute his assumptions on the nature of gay men and women. (Stay tuned to the Congressional hearings on the matter.) In the future, hopefully soon, Gomulka's bigoted assumptions will be thrown in the dustbin of history along with other former fundamentalist assumptions such as the curse of Ham on the Africans or that Jews eat their children.

Glen M. W. Trowbridge
Los Angeles, CA

. . . One of Chaplain Gomulka's primary fears, oft-repeated by opponents of homosexuals in the military, is the possibility of the spread of AIDS. He notes that "two-thirds of all AIDS cases are directly attributable to homosexual conduct." What he fails to observe is that in the United States military today the vast majority of AIDS cases are not due to homosexual conduct (or even drug use), but rather to heterosexual intercourse with prostitutes. Only when the military succeeds in keeping young soldiers and sailors away from brothels will it be relatively free of the fear of AIDS (and other sexually transmitted diseases). But, as Chaplain Gomulka observes, it is not so easy to separate tendencies from behavior, especially after months at sea (and in an environment where pornography, going to strip-joints, and engaging the favors of prostitutes is part of the dominant subculture of warrior machismo).

Approaching the subject from another angle, Chaplain Gomulka quotes the ruling in *Steffan v. Cheney*: "The quite rational assumption in the Navy is that with no one present who has a homosexual orientation, men and women alike can undress, sleep, bathe, and use the bathroom without fear or embarrassment

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that they are being viewed as sexual objects." Well, perhaps the Navy has discovered an infallible system for segregating men and women from each other in combat environments. I know from experience that the Army has not. In the field, male and female soldiers are likely at some time or another to be undressing and sleeping in close proximity to one another. And as women are allowed into more Military Occupational Specialties, this will only increase. . . .

This illustrates the fact that the issue of gays in the military cannot be separated from the larger issue of sexuality in the military. Some, like Rep. Pat Schroeder, argue that the solution to the problem of the sexual harassment of women is to open combat roles to them. Having engaged in joint training exercises with the Canadian Forces, which accept women in combat roles, I can assure you that that is just a fantasy. The Canadian military is just as troubled by issues of sexual harassment as is the American military—in fact, my experience has been that sexual harassment is more prevalent and more overt in the Canadian military. In a similar fashion, opening the military to gays will solve nothing. A recent article in the *Army Times* (which has editorialized in favor of gays) reviewed the experience of gays in the militaries of those countries (such as Israel) where they are legally accepted. All the gays interviewed felt that the legal acceptance amounted to very little—hostility and discrimination remained, causing them to prefer to remain in the closet.

Should gays be allowed to stay in the military? I'm not sure. What I am certain of is that this is simply one head on the hydra of military sexuality. . . .

William J. Cork, Captain
Vermont Army National Guard
Northfield, VT

Eugene T. Gomulka replies:

The hope expressed by Mr. Trowbridge that "truth and reason will ultimately prevail" in regard to the issue of homosexuality and military service is one that I strongly endorse.

As regards the Kinsey study, I mentioned it mainly because so many people have been misled by its conclusions, which were based on a male interviewee sample containing approximately 25 percent prisoners or ex-prisoners, an abnormal percentage of sex offenders, and other sexually unconventional groups in numbers unrepresentative of society. While Mr. Trowbridge's acceptance of Kinsey's continuum theory leads him to conclude that homosexuals constitute between 10 percent and 14 percent of the population, recent findings indicate that it is ideology rather than science which has perpetuated the one-in-ten myth (cf. "How Many Gays Are There?" *Newsweek*, February 15, 1993).

The results of a *New York Times* exit poll conducted during the Presidential election parallel the findings of a National Opinion Research Center (NORC) survey undertaken between 1989 and 1992 which showed that 2.8 percent of the men reported exclusively homosexual activity in the preceding year, while women registered 2.5 percent.

In response to accusations of "misinformation" by Mr. Trowbridge, I refer readers to: 1) "Really, Dr. Kinsey?" *The Lancet* [the British medical journal] Vol. 337, March 2, 1991; 2) J. Gordon Muir, "Let's Get Serious About Scientific Misconduct," *The Scientist*, January 20, 1992; and 3) Judith A. Reisman and Edward W. Eichel, *Kinsey, Sex, and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People*, 1990. As reported in *The Lancet*, "Dr. Reisman and her colleagues demolish the foundations of the [Kinsey reports]"; they also serve to refute Mr. Trowbridge's charges of "bigoted assumptions."

Capt. W. J. Cork writes that "the vast majority of AIDS cases are not due to homosexual conduct (or even drug use), but rather to heterosexual intercourse with prostitutes." I (together with my DOD medical sources) would be most interested in knowing the source of his information.

When I sought to discover what percentage of AIDS cases were the result of various behaviors, the only data I could uncover were provided by the Centers for Disease Control (which reported that two-thirds of all AIDS cases are the result of homosexual behavior). By noting this in my report, I did not wish to give the impression that I am unaware of or condone heterosexual misconduct in the military. I am opposed to all harmful behaviors (e.g., drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, homosexual conduct, etc.) that can injure the young men and women with whom I serve.

Just as I am reluctant to recommend that acknowledged homosexuals be allowed to serve in the stressful, confined, and almost exclusively male environment of life at sea for extended periods of time, so too would I discourage a commanding officer from pulling into a port in Thailand where an extremely high percentage of prostitutes are HIV positive.

While Captain Cork and others are "not sure" if "gays should be allowed . . . in the military," I, as the "principal advisor to the command on moral matters," felt obliged to express my reservations regarding the wisdom of a change in the current policy.

Of Historicists and Fideists

Jon D. Levenson's analysis of historical criticism's relativity ("The Bible: Unexamined Commitments of Criticism," February) is admirable. He recognizes that historicism is "a secular equivalent to fundamentalism" and is unjustified in claiming a superior vantage point, hence its incongruity and potentially negative social impact in an era of pluralism. Seeking to build bridges of communication and dialogue, he articulates justifications for both fundamentalists and liberals in academe. Nonetheless, it is clear he will welcome scholars with religious motivations only under the frame of a multiculturalism whose truth foundation lies outside, and is thus transcendent or supercessionary to, the worldview claim of the believer. But how is such a stance itself to be justified? Is multicultural pluralism the new standard?

Levenson rightly faults the extreme reductionists who find the

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Bible to have originated only as a pretext for political or ideological control, or who exploit historicism to push traditionalists out of the public square. I wonder, however, if he has personally confronted the obvious Truth-claim of Scripture, leading to an understanding of how the Bible could have arisen simultaneously out of both politico-religious and theological reality. The Apostle Paul noted that nature revealed God's eternal power and divine nature to all mankind, thus acknowledging the obvious, that the physical realm can be studied and contemplated by all. The spiritual is a different matter, depending as it does (for its most essential part) on immediate disclosure by the Divine. Contrary to a common perception among historicists, being a believer involves not a reduced perspicacity (notwithstanding some who fall into anti-intellectualism), but a God-created openness to the things of God through the Holy Spirit. The opportunity for such transcendence is available to all through Christ. Believers therefore welcome the dialogue Levenson promotes.

John C. Munday, Jr.
Regent University
Virginia Beach, VA

Jon D. Levenson replies:

Let me thank Dr. Munday and reassure him that I do not regard "multicultural pluralism" as the standard of truth. In fact, I argued quite the contrary: that multiculturalism renders the study of the Bible as an act of cultural affirmation alone immensely problematic and challenges historicists to validate the enterprise by reference to something more than historical description. Dr. Munday's letter, however, prompts me to repeat my worry about the other extreme, "each group treating its own book and its own interpretive procedures as absolute," as I put it, "a model of fideisms at best ignoring each other and at worst colliding." When one identifies "believers" with believers in one's own tradition (Christianity in the case of Dr. Munday), it is hard to see how the conversation that he welcomes can ever be genuinely worthy of the term "dialogue." Fundamentalisms of all sorts can prevent the openness to transcendence that I regard as indispensable to truth.

Beyond Casuistry

Professor Burt Neuborne's outrageous casuistry regarding the meaning of the "no establishment" clause of the First Amendment ("The Ruling 'We' of the American Jewish Congress," Public Square, February) is nothing short of stunning. To contend, as he does, that its purpose is to inculcate fear and hostility toward religion is to turn its true meaning upside down and backwards. . . .

This strange inversion of the "no establishment" clause originated and gained support principally among those who feared that their religious beliefs, or lack thereof, were threatened by a "tyranny of the majority" of America's religious believers—Protestant Christians. Thus, at the first level of analysis, the American Jewish Congress has, quite logically from their point of view, been simply weakening the influence of all religion in public life in order to protect—in their opinion—their own, which they felt they would be forced to practice, in any event, in private. That their action ultimately damages the power of *all* religion, including Judaism—and not only in public life, but private life as well—should surprise no one, and is undoubtedly one basis for the change in stance on this matter by a growing number of rabbis. In fact, they may well have found that Christians who have lost their religion in the secular clutter of modern society are far more dangerous to all people, including Jews, than the most rabid Christian believer.

At the second level of analysis, however, we find ample excuse (though not, I believe, justification) for their fear in the anti-Semitism prevalent in this country over much of its history. Without the perceived threat (which, though most Jews seem disinclined to believe it, was actually ethnic more than religious—a subtle but important difference not fully recognized in most discussions of the problem), Jews would not have felt compelled to mount an attack to subvert the meaning of the First Amendment. Thus, in this sense, we Christians have only ourselves to blame for our loss of religion in public life. However, I sincerely believe that anti-Semitism, especially as defined in its purely religious connotation, is of such greatly diminished significance in America today that it will best die of neglect rather than by assault. One small indication of its diminished significance is the widespread support for Israel within the Christian community.

At this juncture at the close of the twentieth century, I see Christians coming to the belief that in terms of our religious heritage we are all Jews, even if we don't share the same belief regarding one particular Jew. It is time for the American Jewish Congress to recognize this new reality, and join in support of a return to the principle of freedom of expression of religious belief *in any context* without oppression from our government.

Robert J. Bushelle
Barrington Hills, IL

Satire Backwards

Your Public Square item (February) about the history of Harvard's shield bearing the word "Veritas" reminds me of an observation I made recently while feeling very unhappy with the attitudes of some of Harvard's faculty on a number of questions. The observation is that "Veritas" spells "Satire" backwards.

There is an extra "V" to be dealt with, but it can be turned to advantage by constructing the palindrome "Satire V. Veritas." This is not a perfect palindrome, but perfect palindromes are rare, and even more rarely make any sense. "Satire V. Veritas" makes a great deal of sense, however, in describing the contention of sense and nonsense that sometimes characterizes the Harvard scene, and is a wholesome correction to the smugness of "Veritas."

Lawrence Cranberg
A.M. Harvard '40 (Physics)
Austin, TX

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Opinion

National Service as Duty and Perk

Midge Decter

I know a man who spends four or five weeks of every year in the army. He is a young man, but not all that young—fortysomething—and has a wife and four small children. He lives in Jerusalem. His annual five-week tour of service in the Israel Defense Force is called in Hebrew by a term that would be translated into English as "replacement" but is, not insignificantly, etymologically related to the word "fulfillment." He will, like every man of sound mind and body in the country (except for the extremely religious), continue in this way to fulfill his obligation as a member of the reserve until he is fifty-four years old.

My Israeli friend—he happens also to be my son-in-law—is self-employed. This means that during the rest of the year he must somehow make up for the time lost or suffer a proportional decrease in his annual income. Were he a job-holder, it would be his employer who would one way or another be making the adjustment—or suffering the loss.

Perhaps these weeks are not completely lost time for him and his counterparts. For many Israeli men the time spent on reserve duty may possibly also constitute a time of fraternal reunion. Israeli children as a matter of policy remain with the same classmates from kindergarten through high school, and go into the army together and usually remain there together in the same unit (some experts ascribe the disproportionate military effectiveness of Israel's army to this practice). Once they have completed their first three-year tour of duty, however, their lives as students and/or family men and providers may, in the normal way of these things, pull them apart, at least in a day-to-day sense. Thus returning to the army each year may represent for them something socially more enriching than the mere fulfillment of a legal obligation.

Still, there is no way that, for this Jerusalemite and all other Israeli husbands and fathers—along with students at university who miss their exams, and beginners in new jobs or careers who are one way and another bound to be set back—the burden of yearly, as I like to think of it, "fulfillment" is not at the least a nuisance and more often than not downright onerous. (And this, mind you, is in peacetime. In times of war, serious danger, not only for them but for their families "back home," is added to the mix.)

But is the burden not lightened, emotionally and even in some cases economically, by the fact that every man in the country—again, except for the extremely orthodox, whose winning of a special exemption from military duty for their own children has done little to endear them to their countrymen—is required to take up his share of it? Indubitably the answer is yes. In each individual life, however, the load must inevitably be shouldered separately. And, of course, by the whole family.

I thought of my Jerusalemite on February 17, as I listened to President Clinton delivering his first major address to Congress. Among the many hopes, plans, and intentions set forth in the President's speech, one of the more specific was a proposal to establish something going by the name of "national service." In the space of time available to him, of course, Mr. Clinton could offer little more than a hasty outline of this proposal, but he did manage to make clear that what he was referring to was some sort of system whereby American high school (and, as it was to turn out, also college) graduates would exchange some years of service, either as policemen, environmental workers, or offerers of some form of assistance to poor children, in exchange for the government's subsequently paying their college tuition—a kind of GI Bill for non-GIs.

Subsequently, in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* on February 28, the President discussed the program at somewhat greater length. First, he said, some young people will be able to borrow the money they need for college and pay it back after graduation as a small percentage of their income over time. Second, other young people will be given the opportunity to "serve our country for a year or two" and then receive financial support for education or training in return. By 1997, he expects that more than 100,000 citizens will be serving their country, receiving education and training benefits in return, and hundreds of thousands more will be doing vital community work, able now to afford the time for such satisfactions because the need to repay their college loans will no longer "block their way."

The services they will thus be freed to render? Teaching, tutoring, and mentoring in the schools; assisting to immunize two-year-olds in medical clinics; walking beats as policemen and keeping kids out of gangs; controlling pollution and recycling waste.

I thought of my Jerusalem friend because it came to me to wonder how such an idea of "national service" would strike him. He would no doubt be quite bewildered. Indeed, it would probably seem to him

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that taking a couple of years out of a life that has not yet reached full adulthood, spending them on a few of the nation's lighter household chores, so to speak, and then being rather handsomely compensated for it would more accurately come under the heading of perk than of citizenly offering.

Not that he would be inclined to think of his annual forfeit of time and the comforts of home as some special kind of sacrifice. He wouldn't. A nuisance, certainly, and now and then, depending on his schedule, worse than that: a bad break. But the real point is, he actually doesn't think much about it at all. It is what he does, what everyone he knows does, because his country needs him to and expects him to. The word for this, I believe, is duty.

And duty is a word that has not yet crossed the lips of the President. Nor is it likely to. Nor is it to be found in most of the discussions about the virtue and value of public service for America's young people, discussions that have been going on for some years now—for convenience call them "post-Vietnam"—among both liberals and conservatives.

The main impulse behind all this talk, of course, is a troubled feeling about the condition of the young, especially the young of the big-city ghettoes who have been making a great deal of trouble for themselves and others, but not about them alone. In any case, in whatever terms the argument is cast—that the trouble is the kids need some order and discipline, or need to raise their sights, or need to do something that matters, or are soft and spoiled—the notion of service is at bottom not something to be demanded *from* them but something to be done *for* them. It is in truth not about service at all. Quite the contrary; it is about psychic health, or vocational betterment, or, God help us, self-esteem.

Some years ago, for example, there was a flurry of debate about whether or not the country should return to a system of military conscription. A poll was taken (perhaps by Gallup, I no longer remember): an overwhelming percentage of the young men of draft age who were polled said they preferred not to be drafted. And not one party to the debate, nor one media commentator discussing the issue, seemed to notice that the word "draft" and the word "preference," when used in the same sentence, bespeak a profound contradiction. This is a contradiction endemic to a society that—for whatever reason, and at least some of the reasons are probably lost in the mists of history—does not know how to ask anything of its children except that they manage somehow to behave as if their lives are pleasing to them.

Of course, any comparison with Israel is unfair. In the inculcation of a sense of duty, there is no moral equivalent to living under the kind of constant danger of attack that the Israelis do. Nor can those Americans who actually serve, whether in the army proper or in any enterprise connected to their country's defense, have quite so immediate and close-quartered a connection as do Israel's soldiers to the wives and children and parents and friends they are called upon to defend.

Still, it is impossible to believe that any form of public contribution that is secured in exchange for reward will, deep down in their souls, fool America's young men into believing that they are truly shouldering their manly responsibilities. The works they perform might turn out to be helpful—though it would not be beyond the pale of reason to have one's doubts about that—but the effect on them, which is after all the object of the exercise, will only be to reconfirm the message society has for so long and so damagingly been giving them. Actually it is Falstaff's message:

> What is honor? A word. . . .
> Who hath it? He that died a'Wednesday.

MIDGE DECTER *is a Distinguished Fellow of the Institute on Religion and Public Life.*

The Newtape File III

Dear Nephew,

I trust it did not escape your notice that I have eliminated an affectionate diminutive in my greeting. I am just a bit annoyed that those undamned Smiths in Fremont, Nebraska—whom I have placed in your keeping—persist in tithing. You did succeed in staying Mr. Smith's hand briefly—he had pen in hand, checkbook before him, and you planted the vision of, in rapid succession, a new car, a motorboat—but he pushed those seductive objects out of his mind and went ahead with his obnoxiously virtuous duty.

May I suggest, Nephew, that perhaps your eagerness got the better of you. You should have remained with the vision of the car just a bit longer. By trotting out a second object Mr. Smith's heart "wants" you inadvertently triggered his concern about having too much when so many have too little. If you had fixed the car image a bit longer, allowed Mr. Smith to linger awhile, things might have turned our way. But the word "selfish" came into his mind; then "excessive"; then, "I don't really need these things," a sentence I hope to eradicate from the English language by the year 2020. At that point all was lost, you see, and I am annoyed that I must teach you what you ought by now to have learned: if he had construed his desire as reasonable, he might have found a way to

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shave off his givings to the church. Please remember that overeagerness in the pursuit of diabolism is no virtue, not when we have them more or less where we want them. The "cultural context," as certain of the smart set like to put it, is already temptation-friendly. We need not jump the gun.

Let me explain, for you seem to be in the grip of an unwarranted anxiety. You recall, I assume, our hero of the moment, Woody. I fear you may not understand the full extent of all he has taught. For his primary lesson is that guilt is everywhere, hence it is nowhere. He has wonderfully trivialized guilt. He is guilty when he gets up in the morning. So what difference does it make to add a little titillating borderline incest? By blurring any distinction between big and small things, he has helped to make our work easier.

The Enemy, as you were taught in The Infernal Day School, is an obsessive distinction-maker. He has worked all-too-successfully to instill this noxious habit in those debased creatures he seems truly, as Uncle Screwtape has already pointed out, to love. The more the popular and elite cultures embrace the view that guilt is bad, the better for us. And if guilt applies to everything by definition, its trivialization is the next best thing to eliminating it altogether.

I for one am so relieved that that pesky fellow, Sigmund Freud, has been misinterpreted in ways that more often than not support our cause. Freud was far too priggish and moral to be securely in the camp of Our Father. Undamnable fellow! He kept insisting on reflective ethical standards and the like. It was a close call for a while, but we appear to have tilted things our way by promoting the view that guilt itself is bad, rather like a nasty, automatic tic to be demeaned and turned into a joking matter or extirpated altogether. Because Freud is so pervasive a name, it was our lucky break to be able to associate his authority with our distinction-eroding work. You will recall—but please keep it to yourself, you are often far too blabby about our work—that Freud claimed the poor human race labored under too heavy a burden of guilt unattached to real infractions. Appropriate remorse for injuries actually inflicted is, for Freud—and I am sorry to report this—a "good" not a "bad" thing. To be sure, he made certain comments about The Enemy that have served us well. But he never left off talking about the integrity of being Jewish and similar babbling that seemed to undercut his salutary atheism. Thankfully, all this is behind us. What is left is the acidic residue—the all-pervasive moan and groan that guilt is bad or comic. A tremendous triumph for Our Father Below.

Keep your eye on the prize, Nephew. Try some distinction-erosion of your own. Those wretched Smiths, parochial rustics that they are, pay no attention to heavy metal and groups with demonic designer names: "Black Sabbath," "Judas Priest," and the like. Though even here things sometimes get tricky. For often such groups seem to be mocking rather than worshipping Our Father Below. Undamned human humor! Perhaps you could entice the teenage son into listening to the gloriously violent and marvelously misogynistic forms of "Rap Music."

I'm thinking of lyrics my cloven-hoofed compatriot, Demonica, as clever a deviltress as ever confounded human beings, helped to write. In your backwater you perhaps missed "Death Certificate," a song promoting salutary racism. Koreans are described as "Oriental one-penny countin' mother-f . . . s" and threatened with being burned "to a crisp." A second estimable lyric excoriates the "white Jew telling you what to do," and the remedy is breathtaking in its fiendish directness: a "bullet in his temple." One of my own favorites—Demonica played this for me the other evening when I was in a bit of a slump, having watched that horrible Bruce Springsteen spread the joys of parenthood and adult responsibility during a televised concert—is "Momma's Gonna Die Tonight," about murdering and dismembering his Mother shouted at fever pitch by an energetic recruit for Our Father below, one Ice-T. (Demonica instructed me that his musical genre is "speed metal," not "rap," but I told her to stop making distinctions.)

I am performing a nasty little thought experiment even as I write, imagining the capaciously cruel possibilities of this move. Suppose young Bud Smith were to begin listening day and night, hours on end, to lyrics of hatred of women and Jews and others being implanted in his budding (I am clever today!) mind. Suppose Mother Smith were then to announce that she must disallow this "immoral" stuff in her home. One of two strategies, both bearing the imprimatur of Our Father Below, should kick in immediately: forewarned is forearmed, Nephew, and I will brook no flabby excuses from your corner should you fail.

I suggest this first Machiavellian maneuver—old Nicky, what a charming fellow—as it is less subtle. Young Bud must scream "Censorship!" in the face of his beleaguered Mother's protests. She is trying to censor him. He may accuse her of racism, too, but that would be rather ham-fisted as he knows her to be a leader in local interracial activities and she even taught him Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech at one point. (I hope you found this as sickening as I did, by the way.) But the censorship charge might stick. When she protests that she is censoring nothing, rather, she is being a responsible parent, the riposte out of young Bud's mouth should be something along the lines of: "You are forcing me to self-censor. You are denying me my constitutional rights to free expression." Here, you see, we are on the ever-shifting sands of distinction erosion once again. For the charge of censorship is now so pervasive it is virtually meaningless. We have more work to do but we

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are nearly there in our effort to denude censorship of any lingering weightiness. I chortle each time I think of a mother beseeching a child to avoid hate-mongering (in other words, our sort of love lyrics) and one of the late and sorely missed authoritarian regimes of Central/Eastern Europe banning the works of a dissident, for this reminds me that we have been successful beyond our wildest projections in covering both such moments under one word: "censorship." I implore you, Nephew, take advantage of the "cultural context."

A second strategy, more subtle and probably not for a neophyte nemesis such as yourself, is to push Mother Smith into a fearful anxiety about all of American popular culture. Her overreaction will serve our purposes well. If she becomes hysterical and insists that Bud must listen only to albums of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir or Percy Faith chorales or that Lawrence Welk fellow, she will drive him closer to our clammy grasp. I would be particularly pleased if she chucked all the Springsteen albums. That fellow has been a thorn in my side for years, singing about people's responsibilities to their own home towns and similar drivel. His current stuff is really a blow to our Popular Culture Division—moaning about how human beings need kindness toward one another, actually using the word "soul" in a song, condemning the wasteland of Cable-TV, even a rock-lullaby to his newborn son: terrible. I fear Mother Smith will not take the bait, however, so please stay with the censorship ploy. It is a proven winner.

Your affectionate uncle,
Newtape

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, *discoverer of the Newtape File, teaches political philosophy at Vanderbilt University.*

Choice Trees

In primal garden
the tree
stands laden,
splendor
consummate,
grace-rooted,
owned by him
who warns,
don't eat or
sure you'll die.

Yet you,
arrogant Adam
in us all,
grasp prerogatives
never due.

Thrust out,
bedeviled,
you stumble toward
that other tree,
cross-beamed
for life.

Ann Horn

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Saving the World

John P. Sisk

In the Fall 1991 issue of *New Perspectives Quarterly*, which is very usefully devoted to the problems of unity and diversity in the contemporary world, Isaiah Berlin observes that the twentieth century is "the worst century that Europe has ever had." Certainly there is widespread agreement that he is right, especially if the judgment is taken to include Western civilization generally. Inevitably, this agreement goes along with a widespread conviction that the world is badly in need of salvation. Unfortunately, there is a conspicuous lack of consensus whether the salvation should favor unity or diversity. The consequence is a rich smorgasbord of salvational programs, which guarantees that the world in the process of not being saved by any single program will continue not to be a boring place, however dangerous.

In these stressful times the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's widely publicized program of transcendental meditation has a lot to offer. If, says the Yogi, a sufficient number of people led by trained mediators could be induced to sit still and meditate for ninety minutes each morning and evening, the positive waves they emitted would ensure universal peace, improved economy, and a reduction of the crime rate, to say nothing of the physical and spiritual well-being of one and all. The cost to employ seven thousand meditators would be $20 million, a mere pittance when one considers what it will cost to keep the world armed to the teeth or repair the economy of what was once the Soviet Union. Indeed, even a skeptic might agree that if a significant percentage of the world's population could be persuaded simply to sit still in a room for 180 minutes a day, in the interval abstaining from booze, cigarettes, junk food, and the customary assaults on the environment and one another, the world might be vastly improved, even if it still fell short of a grand harmonic convergence.

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There is, of course, always the possibility that such a high-minded enterprise would turn out to be a repetition of the fiasco suffered through a few years ago in Antelope, Oregon, by the followers of another charismatic Asian, the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. There, after an initial euphoric experience of unity in diversity, it developed that Rajneeshism and its sacred book were the creations of an enchantress, Ma Anand Sheela, who, repeating the experience of many a Western con artist, got out of town one jump ahead of the law.

Ma Sheela left behind not only eighty-five Rolls Royces but a lot of disenchanted people. We can assume that many of them would henceforth be wary of committing themselves to any self-transcending communitarian effort. This was the way it was with Cervantes' Don Quixote when he climbed off his Rocinante for the last time. He had had it with that magician Frestón and the other enchanters who by opposing him had only reinforced his conviction that he could save the world by establishing a community of chivalric virtue. He now saw this ambitious project to be as artificial and futile as his subsequent plan to retire to the fields with his friend the barber and Sancho Panza to live a shepherd's life. We might say that he had learned the hard way that one who sets out to save the world can himself be changed in ways he might have anticipated had he trusted his common sense to begin with.

We can say, however, that the Don had had himself a life: had also learned that the bonus for trying to save the world (it may be the only recompense) is the life-enhancing adventure of it. This is the Rocinante effect. In 1965 when Che Guevara was sallying out on his own world-saving expedition he wrote to his family: "Once again I feel Rocinante's bony ribs beneath my legs. Again I begin my journey, carrying my shield." If he was an adventurer it is of a different

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kind, "one who risks his skin to prove his convictions." But it is this way with all who feel those bony ribs beneath their legs—riders as different as Shakespeare's Hotspur, the French Revolution's St. Just, or the temperance movement's Carrie Nation. The problem, of course, is to resist the temptation to reduce all risky acts to the self-enhancing adventure they entail, so that virtue is equated with entertainment and society has no useful way to distinguish between a Don Quixote and an Antigone.

Hegel said of that world-saver Robespierre what he might have said about Che Guevara: "This man took Virtue seriously, and gave it the foremost place in the ordering of policy." But taking virtue seriously is the moral correlative of the Rocinante effect. Who ever took virtue more seriously than Don Quixote, overwhelmed as he was with "the wrongs that were to be righted, the grievances to be redressed"? Don Quixote's advantage, however, was a final critical position from which he could see that an unexamined virtue is no more worth acting on than, as Socrates had earlier put it, an unexamined life is worth living. There is no indication that Che Guevara had time for revisionary second thoughts about the efficacy of violent revolution before he and his guerrilla band were violently destroyed in Bolivia. As for Robespierre, one can easily enough imagine his despair as, in agony from his bullet-fractured jaw, he was carried past jeering throngs, but he had an appointment with a machine designed to deny the validity of all second thoughts.

Henry David Thoreau took virtue as seriously as Robespierre, Che Guevara, and Don Quixote. Indeed, when William Dean Howells saw Thoreau for the first time, he was reminded of the Don. Thoreau's scorn for philanthropists is well known: they wanted to save a kind of world that was not worth saving. Nevertheless, his *Walden* is the record of a tested-out salvational program for an elite with the stomach for a life that is both libertarian and abstemious in the interest of the higher hedonism. But as his passionate involvement with the John Brown affair later made clear, he had not been inoculated against the Rocinante effect. He preferred that Brown be hung after the disastrous adventure at Harper's Ferry, believing that Brown's death would serve the abolitionist cause more than his life would. For Thoreau, and for all those who take too seriously their too hastily examined virtues, persons are useful in proportion as they serve good causes.

Here we have a version of what in reaction to the counterculture permissiveness of the sixties and seventies was called tough-love: a principled refusal to let sentiment stand in the way of necessary and even painful discipline. The rod is applied lovingly, however vigorously, in the interest of the child's well-being, usually out of the conviction that life itself is a tough-loving affair in which the coddled do not survive. World-savers are notorious tough-lovers, as hard on themselves as on others, which means that they are not much impressed with Kant's bias against those who refuse to take individuals as ends in themselves. For Robespierre the guillotine was a tough-loving, parental rod applied in the interest of the Republic of Virtue in which "one single will" would prevail. Lenin, who took virtue very seriously indeed, was also a tough-lover. In *To The Finland Station* Edmund Wilson gives us an example of the self-abnegating discipline that such a kind of loving can entail for all parties in the relationship. Lenin and Gorky are listening to Beethoven's *Appassionata*. Lenin loves it, could listen to it every day. It fills him with pride as he thinks of the "marvelous things human being can do!" But the effect, he says, can be dangerous, can make you "want to say stupid nice things and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this vile hell." So head-stroking is out. "You have to hit them on the head, without any mercy, although our ideal is not to use force against anyone." Our duty, he concludes, "is infernally hard."

If the world of the committed Marxist is an enchanted one that supplies ample exercising room for his heroic austerity, this is not only because it is ruled by an historic enchanter, Karl Marx, but because that enchanter has himself been enchanted by the world-saving promise of dialectical materialism. The process of the latter is just as tough-loving as that of Hegel's world-historical spirit, and Marx's scorn of utopian programs is the scorn of a stern parent who sees the children of over-permissive neighbors going to the dogs. Once your Marxism "has been deepened and purified," as Che Guevara claimed that his had been, the ascesis of total commitment is inevitable. If the way is authentically salvational it must be a hard one. As Don Quixote found out in the days of his enchantment, being a world-historical figure is not all fun.

It is no surprise to see a literary intellectual like the Hungarian socialist Georg Lukács enduring the austerities of Stalin's Russia as uncomplainingly as St. Anthony endured the rigors of life in the North African desert. It is no more surprising to see Lenin scorning the easy way of bourgeois Christian morality and preferring the infernally hard way of the revolutionary conscience than it is to see him rejecting the idea that the state might wither away without the preliminary revolutionary violence. We expect Rosa Luxemburg's biographer J. P. Nettl to tell us that elaborate decoration and any excess were repugnant to the Polish-born revolutionary, and that, like a true puritan, she "was always attracted by simplicity because social questions were essentially simple." To put it in terms that the enchanted Don Quixote would understand: no Dulcinea del Toboso is worth winning if she is too easily won. One can assume that

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George Blake, the last of the KGB's moles in England, would agree: he claims to have no second thoughts about the tough-loving willingness that led him to sacrifice colleagues and country to a noble but now failed experiment.

For Thoreau, too, social questions were essentially simple; indeed, no American has done more to make "simplicity" a world-saver's buzz word. Emerson said that Thoreau "wished to settle all his practice on an ideal foundation" so that he "was a protestant *à l'outrance.*" Rosa Luxemburg was that kind of protestant and so was Lukács. Both, as Nettl says of her, "subscribed whole-heartedly to the interlocking totality of Marxism." Both, as the biographer Arpad Kadarkay says of Lukács, "clothed the body of events in the flowing robes of utopia." In other words, in the enchantments of their Marxism there was a strong aesthetic component that made it possible to dream of harmonizing a tough-loving means with humanistic expectations.

Che Guevara says in his letter to his family that he has perfected his will with an artist's care. Indeed, the work of art has always been a compelling model for totalistic world-savers since they, no less than empire builders, see in it the proof that no grand conclusion is possible without a ruthless but tough-loving subordination of parts to whole. Here we cannot forget the well-intended ruthlessness of Don Quixote as he strove like his creator to subordinate all the elements in his enchanted life to his grand design. Nor can we forget that the author of *The Communist Manifesto* began as a poet and liked to recite passages from Goethe and Shakespeare as he led his family back from Sunday picnics at Hampstead Heath. It may be that to do justice to Lenin we have to imagine that Beethoven's music had all along been both a life-model for him and a guarantee that once enough heads had been hit the grand harmonies of Soviet realism would be inevitable. Perhaps there was a Lenin-in-the-closet who would have agreed with the poet and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz that "between revolution and religion, poetry is the other voice" and that "each poem is a practical lesson in harmony and concord."

But there is room for uneasy second thoughts here. These practical lessons in harmony and concord are what make the cultural commissar anxious to co-opt poetry so that, in the interest of his own world-saving realism, poetry's tough-loving utopian process can be disjoined from its bourgeois false consciousness. Perhaps it is safe to say that in the good society poets, relieved of the anxiety of competition from commissar-endorsed poetry, will be free to use their "other" voices to enhance the quality of life while the rest of us will be free not to listen.

In any event, poetic totalists like Rosa Luxemburg and Georg Lukács must believe that a truly saved world, liberated from the enchantments of bourgeois democratic capitalism, would no longer suffer from the divisiveness of nationalism. But now there are those who see the culture of American capitalism as the true salvational force working against that divisiveness as it produces a global melting pot. In the *New Perspectives Quarterly*'s special issue Pico Iyer, world-traveler and author of *The Lady and the Monk*, sees American pop culture as having all those happy cross-cultural effects that Marx's dialectic anticipated. America in this view is the center of a cultural ecumenism in which designer jeans, McDonald's hamburgers, and rock music are the effective agents. Elsewhere in that issue Michael Eisner, president and CEO of the Walt Disney Company, sees the same sort of world-unifying work being done by the Disney theme parks, which are exporting the American Dream across national boundaries—and along with it the American originality exemplified by the continuing self-creation of such world-historical persons as Madonna and Michael Jackson. Mr. Eisner believes that he is not exaggerating when he says that "the American entertainment industry is helping to change history." This is of course not the way Hegel's historical world spirit is supposed to be going about its business.

Eisner might have given some credit to that branch of the American entertainment industry that specializes in the various forms of self-enhancement: books like Marianne Williamson's *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles*, Anthony Robbins' *Unlimited Power* and *Awaken the Giant Within*, John Bradshaw's *Homecoming: Reclaiming and Championing Your Inner Child*, and Leo Buscaglia's *Bus 9 to Paradise*. Such books are as much in the American tradition of self-salvation as Emerson's essays or Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. This is a basically optimistic literature, medicine for a disaffected and demoralized world. "We are like the spokes on a wheel, all radiating out from the same center," says Williamson; a life of unlimited joy is available to us, says Buscaglia; we can change the world if we first change ourselves, says Robbins, who, after changing himself, became a millionaire at twenty-four; the neglected inner child, the major source of the world's misery, can be reclaimed, says Bradshaw—who, to judge from the best-selling *Revolution from Within*, seems to have been an inspiration to Gloria Steinem.

Mr. Eisner's way of saving the world of course implies the free market with its catering to a consumerist society. This is not a world-saving prospect for Robert Pollin and Alexander Cockburn, whose own manifesto, "The World, the Free Market, and the Left," appears in *The Nation* (February 25, 1991). For them, Adam Smith's beneficent hidden hand has proven to be as malevolent as any of Don Quixote's enchanters. In order to save society from person-debasing capitalism with its dependence on

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profit and alienating work, the authors take on and expose a number of myths, one of which is that socialist central planning has been a disaster. The Left's proper business, they believe, is to recapture socialism's "great life-affirming vision."

Pollin and Cockburn's unhappiness with the direction of free-marketing American democracy may seem specific to the post-Cold War world, but it has been around long enough to be as much a part of the American tradition as civil disobedience. One may wonder if America hasn't all along suffered from having been oversold as the embodiment of an order pregnant with the potential for world salvation—just as Stalin's Soviet Union was for Lukács and Luxemburg (for her, Russian was the language of the future). The Soviet Union was their true America just as much as it was for disaffected Americans like Mike Gold and John Reed.

For Lukács' friend Max Weber such people are imprisoned within the iron cage of ideology. Apparently, even a short-term existence in that cage predisposes them to doubt that the real-life Americans they see or read about are the materials out of which an enduring new order can be created. Such Americans are too selfishly and tastelessly affluent, too impervious to grand organizing themes that transcend their immediate interests, too arrogantly materialistic to take virtue seriously. A person who was once entranced by a grand unifying vision does not give up on it easily. To such a person the Madonna-worshipping, environment-polluting, and inside-trading American is exactly what an apparatchik would expect the proletariat to turn into once party discipline was relaxed and the spokes began to separate from the wheel of the party. This American is resented not simply for not knowing that there is no free lunch but for wanting more than his fair share of such lunch as there is, and glorying in his conspicuous consumption of it. He is the living proof of what can happen to a society that cannot control its appetites, including its appetite for individualism. Besides, he is aesthetically offensive as he displays all the familiar characteristics of the new and vulgar rich.

But the disparagers of America are moved by more than envy or disgust. Bourgeois, capitalist, democratic America suffers perhaps even more from a guilt-laced nostalgia for an ascetic and tough-loving order that its critics (many of them American) cannot dissociate from any sincere and effective effort to save the world—or one's soul, for that matter. Those who have directly experienced such an order, whether in a sacred or secular context, know how addictive its moral imperative can be. Apparently there is something like a cultural gene in societies as well as individuals that inclines them to a cybernetic and disciplined self-abnegation whenever they are threatened by the promise that *Bus 9 to Paradise* can be caught on any old corner. So we get the tightly structured and communitarian renunciations of Nazism and Marxism with their promise that the ascetic tough-loving way will put you on the only corner to catch the bus, and you will know it is the right one if it has no shock absorbers and bypasses all Disney theme parks.

But as Rosa Luxemburg herself discovered, the addictive way of heroic self-abnegation can exact a harsh penalty. Another of her biographers, Elzbieta Ettinger, tells us that Rosa agonized over her failure to answer her parents' letters because of her preoccupation with politics. Much later, in a German prison camp, she wrote to a friend that she was still blaming herself for neglecting her old sick father because she was too busy "taking care of mankind's urgent affairs and making the whole world happy." God knows whether she had time for second thoughts about anyone's capacity to make the whole world happy before she was taken from prison and assassinated. We can be fairly certain, however, that her killer, like most political assassins, took virtue very seriously.

But "bloody Rosa" was an oversimplification. In prison she became absorbed in botany and zoology and was able to cultivate orchids. To a friend she wrote that although she expected to die at her post "the real 'deep' me belongs more to my butterflies than it does to my comrades." Tears welled in her eyes as she stood in front of a team of brutally beaten Romanian buffaloes and imagined their desolate isolation from home pastures.

Indeed, it is always startling, and sometimes even comforting, to discover that there is a tender "real me" inside the most adamantly tough-loving world-saver. Conventionally this closeted persona is revealed in an aesthetic sensibility (Lenin's love of Beethoven or Lukács' love of the classic literature that did not square with the expectations of socialist realism), but perhaps even more conventionally in an affection for subhuman living things. Lenin's wife has testified that once on a hunting holiday her husband refused to shoot a fox because it looked so beautiful. In his youth, says his sister, Robespierre agonized over a lost pet bird, and in later years was happy to have his beloved dog Brount sleep at the door of his room. Hitler's Alsatian bitch Blondi seems to have been his most congenial companion. When Rousseau's dog Sultan got temporarily lost in England his master was devastated. Thoreau kept cats as pets and was on the best of terms with gray squirrels, woodchucks, and crows; sparrows perched on his shoulders and mice ate from his hands. Those who want to counter the charge that Freud's mechanistic psychology is biased against true individualism can point to Freud's unabashed affection for a series of chow dogs, the last of which kept him company as he lay dying in England. Similarly, those who need to believe that tough-loving and world-

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saving socialism can still have a human face may take comfort from the image of Marx happily riding a donkey during those family picnics at Hampstead Heath.

The problem, of course, is whether this unexpectedly appearing "real me" is anything more than a compulsive return of a cripplingly repressed self. Because animals are so easy to love, the loving relationship between humans and animals is too easily taken as a model for all kinds of bonding, as it is by the more rabid environmentalists. Pet lovers don't have to worry about suffering the disillusioning second thoughts that are always a threat to human loving. But the important question is the human context of animal-loving. Is Thoreau's love of gray squirrels his way of hiding from himself the inhumanity of his attitude towards all those (including the Irishmen who helped build the hated railroad) who insist on living lives of quiet desperation? Does Robespierre's love of Brount give you more or less reason to believe that the guillotine is really an instrument of love for him and the world he wants to save, or is it only a way for him to live more or less comfortably, perhaps even self-indulgently, with a part of himself that he cannot incorporate into his whole life? May there not be in the personalities of such people an affective disorder that is reflected in their reductive image of us and in the direction they have chosen for us?

To judge from her recently published book, Gloria Steinem, like Rosa Luxemburg, has discovered that in the process of self-abnegating service to a great cause the "real me" can be lost—censored out of existence, one might say, by the Rocinante effect. But Steinem's advantage is that she has had time to recoup the losses of the infernally hard way. So we have the story of her self-esteem recovered through a revolution within, which sounds like a civilized advance over Stalin's revolution from above or Robespierre's revolution of loving violence. We may be a compound of many selves, Ms. Steinem says, "But there is always one true inner voice. Trust it." That voice, she agrees with John Bradshaw, is the voice of the "untamed and spontaneous child." And as we know from Bradshaw, the failure to honor the claims of that child, who is a wonder child manqué, is a major source of the world's miseries.

Ms. Steinem's Emersonian revolution from within has the advantage of promising individual salvation without the tough-loving denial of the inner self that left Rosa Luxemburg weeping for the Romanian buffaloes as forlornly as Rachel wept for her lost children. Her critics may complain that she is selfishly deserting an earlier commitment, but they are overlooking the world-saving potential in her program: in proportion as the sum of authentically liberated wonder selves is increased the chances for the truly benevolent and unified community will increase. The wonder children, released from their invidious confinement, will save the world by making it in all ways wonderful, and perhaps even recapture socialism's great life-affirming vision. To this end, she says (still sounding like Emerson, if not the Maheesh Yogi), "Religion should stop telling us that we are innately sinful, and encourage the godlikeness and self-authority in us instead."

Whether or not the resulting condition turns out to be utopian, there will be along the way the usual problem of triage: the establishment of tough-loving priorities in order to discriminate among options. If we are all a compound of many selves, each with its own inner voice, how are we to identify the most authentic and trustworthy one? The discontents of our lives have a good deal to do with civilization's reproduction within ourselves of its clamor of conflicting voices. Thus a man like Robespierre, whose power as an enchanting world-saver goes along with an absolute trust in one of his own inner voices, will always appeal to some people because, by eliminating opposing voices, he promises to make the world a quieter and at the same time a more just place. For as the errant Don Quixote painfully discovered, the world's clamor of voices is hard to distinguish from its injustices.

Unfortunately, saving the clamorous world has proven historically to be a noisy if not bloody business. This means that, for those optimists who can stand the pressure, world-savers are to be commended at least for delaying the terminal boredom that the latter-day Hegelian Francis Fukuyama in a famous essay has associated with the end of history—a time when, one might otherwise assume, people will no longer have to take virtue seriously in order to feel good about themselves. But among those who cannot stand the pressure are those who, having been traumatized by too many false promises, having had it with Adam Smith and Marx and seeing no viable in-between, now believe that the world is simply not worth saving. Superficially, this puts them in the company of St. Anthony and his fellow North African cenobites. But those tough-loving ascetics were optimists: they despised the world and its deceptively enchanting voices in the interest of a transcendent salvation of their true selves. Theirs was a holy selfishness that took virtue very seriously indeed. As Helen Waddell reminds us in *The Desert Fathers*, they were the athletes of God, in training, we might say, for the ultimate Olympics.

That splendid poet Wallace Stevens had too much irony to harken to such enthralled simplifiers. Yet after World War II, when the times were clamorous with competing world-savers, he would sometimes wonder if he was sufficiently moved by the big, far-reaching issues. As his biographer Joan Richardson tells us, he once admitted in a letter to a friend that "I am, after all, more moved by the first sounds of the

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birds on my own street than by the death of a thousand penguins in Antarctica." This was a way of saying that charity begins at home—a heretical position for professional world-savers, who in the interest of the distant penguins will gladly sacrifice anyone's local birds, even at the risk of losing the penguins as well. Stevens' casual remark helps us see how crucial can be the difference between mere world-preservers and virtue-hounded world-savers.

St. Augustine, who was sensitive to the allure of the desert's ascesis, seems to have been well aware of this difference. No doubt his long battle with the Manichaes had taught him how easily virtue taken seriously but without irony or charity becomes tyranny. In the view of the Manichaes—who, like their close relatives the Gnostics, tend to be utopians manqué and are thus covertly in league with gulag and guillotine—you must be saved *from* a world that is itself not worth saving. But Augustine, Ms. Waddell points out, "had the civic conscience" and did not follow Anthony to the Desert. For him you must be saved *in* the world, however your destiny may be elsewhere. In this view what you need most to be saved from are those tough-loving absolutists who anticipate a world that, having been saved, needs no more saving. Perhaps Cervantes' quondam knight errant, having in his time of dying recovered his true inner self, Alonso Quijano the Good, knew this too. FT

Man in a Glacier

The mountainside failed. But when
we saw that deep spot the dead sun
came back heavy as an engine
and my pick rattled like a gun.

The ice unravelled; we peeled it from
his toothy face, glittering brown,
a woody rubber round his mind,
the Bronze Age still stuck to his tongue.

We etched; I touched his empty thumb.
My present echoed like a tomb.
We stood in the twilight alpine wind.
We knelt into the glassy loam

until our slowing fingers numbed,
stroking out his ancient stone
with gentleness like fishes' fins,
tinkering his resurrection—

trowelling out unfinished bone
four thousand years away from home—
cold laboring late angels asking him,
Who do you say I am?

Kent Gramm

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Sex and the Single Life

Philip Turner

What is it that Christians ought to say and do about the issue of sexual relations between single people? This question currently presses most painfully upon the life of the churches. The real issue is not whether the churches ought to adopt a new sexual ethic, but whether the new sexual ethic they are in fact in the process of adopting is one that is "worthy of (their) calling." Let me explain.

In 1982, *Newsweek* magazine published the results of a poll carried out by two scholars at Johns Hopkins University. It showed that one out of every five young women who reach the age of fifteen admitted to having had sexual intercourse. By the time these young women reach sixteen the figure rises to one in three, and by the time they are seventeen the number is one of every two. If we add to this the sexual activity of young men of the same age, of gay men and lesbian women at a later stage of life, and that of unmarried and divorced heterosexual couples, it becomes clear that the sexual practice of people in our society is quite different from that held to be normative by the traditional teaching of the churches.

The notable change in behavior that has taken place over the past thirty years would not be of such great significance if it were not accompanied as well by a change in the way people think about sexual relations. There have, after all, been many periods and places where sexual practice has been quite loose. There have as well been periods and places where it has been quite strictly controlled. Changes in behavior are not new, but the way in which we *as a society* are now beginning to think about that behavior is quite new.

James Nelson's very popular book, *Embodiment*, provides an exemplary instance of revisionist Christian thinking on this subject, and it does so for two reasons. The first and most obvious is that what he has to say captures so well the essence of the revisionist argument, and second it makes clear that the argument of the revisionists is the same whether they are speaking of heterosexual or homosexual relations. This second point is important because the two issues are usually treated separately—as if what one argued about relations between members of the same sex was quite different from what one might argue about relations between people of different sexes. Though these two cases may be distinct, the issues in both are not all that different. In large measure, they engage the same points, and thus it is a mistake in moral reasoning to address them as if they were utterly discrete issues.

The line of argument Nelson himself follows makes this very point and shows it to be a line that is quite explicit in the arguments being made by the new reformers. What he has to say about sexual relations between single people, be they heterosexual or homosexual, is of a piece with, and in the end but an extension of, what he says about marital relations themselves. The basic point to be made about *all* forms of sexual relation is that they are supposed to be a means for the "expression of love" and so also for the establishment and maintenance of "communion." They are, therefore, appropriate only when a certain degree of "loving commitment" is present. When this degree of love and commitment is present, they are acceptable. It is simply the case that sexual relations are "natural" to "embodied" life, and so may be (and indeed usually are) necessary for the wholeness and fulfillment of individuals no matter what their marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identification may be.

The moral acceptability of these relations, then, is seen to depend not on an undertaking the terms of which are set by Divine providence but on the motivations and intentions of moral agents, and on the

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nature and consequences of their acts. The acceptable motive for a sexual relationship is love; the acceptable intention is that "each genital act should aim at human fulfillment and wholeness." "Fulfillment" and "wholeness" in turn are said to involve emotional sustenance, healing, and, most of all, growth for the parties involved. As can easily be anticipated, in this scheme of things the sexual act itself is to be judged not on the basis of goods that are internally related to the act itself (unity and procreation), but on the basis of whether or not it is "loveless." A loveless act is one that is "coercive, debasing to others' sensitivities, utterly impersonal, [or] obsessed solely by physical gratification."

Nelson's point is easily grasped, but it is easy to miss its staggering implication, namely, that there is, properly speaking, no special ethic for sexual relations. Sexual acts are to be judged in the same way all other acts are to be judged: on the basis of whether they promote flourishing and avoid harm and coercion. Sexual acts, like all others, have no particular goods or ends that are proper to them, and for this reason, like all acts, are to be assessed *only* on the basis of intention on the one hand and results on the other. There is, as Nelson says, no act that is "inherently right or wrong."

Nevertheless, precisely because moral acts are relative in this way, in all sexual relations certain promises are necessary if the parties involved are not to harm one another, affront one another's dignity, or illegitimately rob one another of their liberty. Thus Nelson insists, as do most of the new reformers, that in all sexual relations there ought to be present "commitment," "openness" (or "vulnerability"), and "care."

Now these universally mandated promises are to be not made in relation to the particular undertakings that might arise out of individual needs and desires. Neither are they mandated by the intrinsic nature of the acts themselves nor by the set nature of the undertakings of which those acts may rightly be a part. They are mandated simply to promote "respect for persons" and so to insure that their rights are not trampled upon. These promises do not derive from undertakings or from a moral character intrinsic to human acts. They derive instead from the need to protect the rights of individuals to choose their undertakings and so contract by means of promises for particular goods in the sexual market place.

In making this argument, Nelson speaks with the voice of our culture, and in so doing gives expression to the views of a significant number of Christians as well. It is clear that what he says applies to marital relations, adulterous relations, and to relations between single people both of the same and of opposite sex. There is no special line of reasoning needed for any of these forms of relationship because each is but another form of expressing love with a view to the establishment and maintenance of communion and for the promotion of growth.

The objections to this position are well known. It is, say many, quite contrary to the plain sense of Scripture. Critics further insist that terms like "commitment," "vulnerability," and "care" as used by the new reformers are, when compared to the vows demanded in the marriage rite, both extraordinarily limited in their content and vague in respect to the matter of duration. This limitation of both the extent and duration of the bond that ought to link people in a sexual relation has the effect of making such relations increasingly unstable and at the same time of trimming the virtues required of the agents involved in them.

Critics point out further that the new reformers must make a division *in principle* between the sexual and marital goods of unity and procreation and thereby make licit forms of "baby making" that have, *in principle*, no connection with "lovemaking." The point is also made that if the arguments of the new reformers are applied, as usually they are, both to heterosexuals and homosexuals, they effectively erase the moral significance (for sexual relations) of the sexual and gender-related differences between men and women.

In response, proponents of Nelson's position charge that the understanding of the Bible held by defenders of the "traditional ethic" gives undue authority to specific texts. These are after all relative to time and circumstance and are subject to judgment on the basis of whether or not they serve the purposes of love. Advocates claim further that the "traditional ethic" has plunged people into precipitous and disastrous marriages. They note that the traditional ethic takes no account of the vastly extended period that now exists between the onset of puberty and the age when marriage is possible and appropriate. They remind their readers also of the fact that there are now an extremely large number of permanently single people and that, if they are homosexual, marriage is out of the question for them altogether. They go on to assert that these people are nonetheless sexual beings with needs and desires that must not be ignored if they are to have healthy and full lives. They point out that sexual relationships are "natural" to human beings, are part of the world created by God, are good, and that no one ought to be denied such a relation simply on the basis of marital status or sexual orientation.

The above arguments and counterarguments are well known. It is clear, however, that the parties to this debate in large measure simply talk past each other. Neither engages the point the other is trying to make. One reason for this failure to engage in genuine debate is that the parties to the disagreement have very different views both of moral agency and the nature of the moral life. This difference is an extremely important one to note for the simple

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reason that the ideas of the new reformers enjoy an increasing appeal—their notions about moral agency and the nature of the moral life cohering so well with the views about these matters that now are characteristic of American culture.

This coherence can be seen in the place of honor now given two words that serve to sum up both moral agency and the moral life. The words are "person" and "self," and the adequacy of the position of the new reformers hinges largely upon the adequacy of these two words (as now used) to account for the nature of the moral life and the nature of moral agency. Person and self are the words that carry our present-day moral universe, and it is sad to note that the more traditional arguments about sexual relations have failed to take their meaning and power into account. As a result, the traditional views still officially held by the churches seem to many people strangely out of place. The same cannot be said of the new reformers. They trade upon the current power and meaning of these words, and thus their arguments present themselves with enormous force.

Force of presentation and strength of appeal do not, however, imply anything about adequacy. Here, the focus will be not on "persons" and their "rights" but on "selves" and the various attendant notions that give this conception its resonance and power. It is really the notion of the self that provides the greatest support for the view of promises and undertakings we have been tracking. It lies at the heart of revisionist arguments about sex, and these cannot be assessed apart from an analysis of the significance and adequacy of "the self" as a moral notion.

What, in a moral sense, do we convey when we refer to people as "selves"? Charles Taylor has pointed out that there are three assumptions that serve to give the self its moral definition. The first is that the self does not define people by social status and role but by inwardness, by a subjectivity that gives each moral agent depths. These depths make each self an "individual." The second is that the self's proper sphere of activity is "everyday life" rather than, let us say, the mythical landscape of heroes or the heavenly one of saints. The third is that each self has abilities and that the point of everyday life is to discover those abilities and put them into operation. In this way the self grows, discovers its depths, and finds the satisfactions everyday life is supposed to yield.

Along with these notions of self come three moral ideas that direct and limit the self's activities. The first is benevolence. Each self ought to act in a generous fashion toward all other selves so that each self can find the conditions necessary for its growth and development. The second is justice understood first of all as the guarantee of rights. Each self has dignity and as such should be accorded rights that protect that dignity and allow the self to pursue its good without undue impediment. The third moral idea is that suffering can be and ought to be eliminated from daily life. Indeed, the elimination of suffering, in a way that would strike people of previous ages as wildly utopian, has become a major social imperative. In the moral world inhabited by "selves," suffering is in no way seen as either an inevitable or as a useful part of life.

Even this brief summary of Taylor's account of the self ought to make clear the "fit" between contemporary notions of moral agency and the views of the new Christian reformers. If we further assume that "sexuality" in some way defines the inner depths of the self, and if "sexuality" is thought to stamp the powers and abilities the self is to discover, develop, and exercise in the course of daily life, then, all other things being equal, it makes sense to say that sexual relations ought not to be tied to anything like set undertakings. To speak of sexual undertakings in the way implied by the traditional marriage rites of the churches is to deny people access to a basic human good from the start and for reasons that are difficult if not impossible for modern people to grasp.

Indeed, the traditional teachings of the churches seem neither benevolent nor just, and are most certainly believed to cause suffering. Given the present social climate, those not involved in a sexual relation are bound to feel a keen sense of insufficiency (and perhaps exclusion). Lacking such a relation, people are apt to feel that their lives are lacking a basic good, and it therefore makes no sense to most of them to say that, because they are not married, cannot marry, or ought not to marry, that they ought also to abstain from sexual relations.

Assumptions like these about "sexuality" are just those that Michel Foucault says accompany modern ideas about the "self." In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault says that "sexuality" now serves the same purpose as did the word "soul" in the Middle Ages. At that time, "soul" provided its users with a way to unite the various aspects of human identity and, in so doing, gave it significance. It is now the function of the word "sexuality" to do the same thing. Thus "sexuality," "self," and "identity" are closely linked by present usage—sometimes to the point that the notions meld one with another. Denial of one's "sexuality" is akin to denial of "oneself" and so also one's basic "identity." It is, therefore, easy to understand why more and more people believe that it is wrong to deny a sexual relation to oneself or to anyone else simply on the basis of marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identification. To do so is tantamount to denial of one's sexuality and so oneself. A denial of the self's basic needs is in turn both harmful and an infringement of each persons right to pursue a full and whole life.

The close relation that exists between the notions

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of "sexuality," "self," "identity," "fulfillment," and "right" makes clear the links between the ideas that underlie the revisionist proposals of the new reformers and those upon which modern political society is founded. In both the bedroom and the public square, the purpose of social relations is the pursuit of private life plans and personal well-being. This is the modern agenda and it is limited only by the principles of no harm and no coercion. It appears that the ideas about "self," "promises," and "undertakings" that have since the seventeenth century become increasingly dominant in the political realm have at the same time seeped into the more intimate spheres of life. In short, ideas that now dominate the public arena control also the debate about sexual ethics. The basic question for theological ethics is what the church ought to conclude about this spread of ideas from the public to the private realm.

Their spread in fact constitutes both a gain and a loss, and the arguments we are now having about sexual ethics will not progress until both the gain and the loss are taken into account. First, what needs to be said about the gain? The major difficulty with "the traditional teaching of the church" is that it has taken little account of individual circumstances. The particular desires and needs of men and women have too frequently been submerged into undertakings and sacrificed too easily to the demands of institutions. The appearance of the twin notions of person and self within Western consciousness serves to counter the tendency to swallow up individuals in collective purposes.

For this reason, the emergence of the sexual self is an important moral event. To have it recognized that we are sexual selves, related in freedom to our ends, with depths to plumb, powers to be used and developed, and that we (all) can do these things in the course of everyday life is in fact a giant moral leap forward. The strength of the new reformers' position is that it recognizes the good of this step in a way that more traditional views have often, though not always, failed to do.

On the other hand, the chief problem with the view of the new reformers is that it fails to recognize that a sexual self, liberated from undertakings that have a moral claim upon it prior to any of its particular intentions and choices, has no satisfactory way to make moral judgments about what it intends, chooses, promises, and then undertakes. The loss connected with the modern view of the self is that, as usually conceived, the self has only the option of following the prompting of its own depths. It therefore appears in the unattractive guise of a dog chasing its tail.

Like "the person" that is so important to the political thought of modern liberal society, the sexual self that is so important to modern reflexive consciousness appoints its own ends. It need not search out the nature of the undertakings God has appointed for it and then struggle to confirm its desires, intentions, choices, promises, and undertakings to those appointed ends. Neither the person nor the self is now thought to flourish within a providence that directs the undertakings of their lives. Rather, both are said to flourish or not as a result of the intentions and choices that flow from their inner depths. As James Milhaven has so clearly stated, it is now up to the autonomous self to "figure out what will be good for those concerned and how this good can be realized, just as it is up to [him], not God, to act and make the good a reality."

If the inner depths of the self are given this sort of authority, it can only mean that the most insistent prompting of the self is always taken as definitive of the self's true nature and good. The self's depths are set up to be judge of the self's depths. Even Locke recognized that it is unsatisfactory to make each "person" the judge in his own case, and surely the same thing is true of "selves." To take this view is to adopt the very dubious proposition that if one has desires and inclinations and they are powerfully presented from the depths of the self, they are, by virtue of the strength of their presentation, both "natural" and "good." To take this view is also to condemn the self to what Auden once called "promiscuous fornication with its own images." Apart from the undertakings that present the self with its arena for action and so its true calling, the self inevitably collapses into itself as it chases about panting after its own productions.

From what has been said thus far, it is obvious that the liberty of individuals to pursue private good is the major moral concern of the new reformers and for this reason their ethical views can fairly be seen as a variety of the contractarian social ethic now increasingly characteristic of political society. Indeed, the fundamental point here is that the strong appeal of the proposals being made by the new reformers is due to the fact that they cohere so well with the way in which we now understand political life and with the way in which we represent ourselves as moral agents.

As one might expect, however, if the reformers' arguments share the strengths that come from coherence with the modern view of the nature of moral and social agency, they also suffer from the weaknesses of these views.

Long ago, Aristotle pointed out that moral arguments are not like geometrical ones. In ethics, there are no deductions to certain conclusions. Moral argument is cumulative rather than deductive. It serves to establish a burden of proof rather than certainty. And when push comes to shove, the traditional teaching of the churches has greater strengths than does the position of the new reformers. (See my "Undertakings and Promises: An Anatomy of Sexual

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Ethics," FT, April 1991.) That teaching makes more sense of marriage and divorce. It is better able to illumine the moral character of familial relations. It can even give a better response to the particular moral problems posed by contemporary accounts of the moral life and moral agency based as they are upon the twin notions of "person" and "self." In respect to this last point, the traditional teaching can provide persons and selves with undertakings about which they can make promises and, in so doing, discover, rather than collapse into, themselves.

In short, a strong case can be made for saying that, as both the common good of society and the particular good of citizens is now threatened by political voluntarism, so also both the common and particular good of lovers (and families) is threatened by the voluntaristic and limited nature of the promises and undertakings that typically characterize the new reformers' account of sexual relations. Despite a strong climate of opinion to the contrary, it is more adequate to argue that, in both the public square and the bedroom, as William Werpehowski has put the traditional view, "persons flourish in and through patterns of relationship that are themselves taken to be normative," and that, in respect to its teaching about the undertakings and promises that ought to accompany a sexual (or political) relation, the church would do well to seek to preserve (again in the words of Werpehowski) "an account of the goods of human relationship against their collapse into the desires or interests of autonomous individuals." It is sensible to conclude in respect to the *moral problems* before the churches that they ought to defend rather than retreat from their traditional teachings and in so doing face squarely rather than turn away from "the pathos of Christian ethics today."

If the churches choose to face this pathos, however, they will at the same time face pastoral issues of fearful proportions. Because the primary intention of the new reformers is to say yes to forms of sexual relations heretofore condemned by the churches, they have a much easier pastoral task than do those who continue to hold to the traditional teaching. To defend this teaching is to appear to be a "no sayer" in the eyes of a culture for which the word "no" has less and less appeal. The pastoral question, therefore, is whether or not the churches, in passing on their traditions about sexual relations, have more to say than "Don't do it."

The truth is that they do—that the pastoral import of the traditional teachings of the churches is more fundamentally positive than negative. Their positive character is readily apparent in the surprising yet simple example that follows. Strange as it may seem, there is no need for someone who holds traditional beliefs to deny that there may be much good in the sexual relations single people enter into. Many of them produce a genuine, though limited, community of life, and in them people often learn far more than they knew before about the nature of love. A person would have to be blind to miss these and other goods that are often present in relationships which for other reasons are not right.

Indeed, if the teachings of the churches are properly understood, it becomes apparent that the good found in these relations in fact derives from what Christians have to say about the goods of the sexual division, the goods of sex, and the goods of marriage itself. The churches have thought that God created men and women for mutual society, and that, as men and women, they are neither to avoid nor despise their life together. The *social* relation between men and women is intended in creation for every man and every woman, and it is given to them so that they will not be alone. The first word beyond "no" to be spoken is that a sexual relation is not necessary to escape loneliness, but social relations between men and women are.

It is God's intention that contra-sexual *social* relations be entered by all, but that *sexual* relations per se be contained within the more specific bond of marriage. Within that bond, protected as they are by promises of fidelity and permanence, sexual relations nourish the unity of the couple, lead to the procreation of children, and provide a most immediate way for a man and a woman to learn what it is to love another as one loves oneself. It is the belief of the churches that this providential ordering provides the framework within which our sexual lives can best serve not only our well-being, but also the more general purposes of God. These are the goods in one way or another sought in all sexual relations.

Observations like these make it obvious that Christians have far more to say to single people than "Don't do it," and that they have far more to say to married people than "Go right ahead." The teachings of the churches about God's providential will for sexual relations are rich and complex. Their truth helps define the fullness of our lives, and apart from a full, vigorous, and positive statement, both single and married people will find it difficult to glimpse the full extent of the promises God has etched in their sexual natures.

If Christians are asked to say "no" to sexual relations outside the bond of marriage, it is because they are called upon to honor God by saying "yes" to a providential ordering of life intended both for the glory of God and our individual and common good. What we know, however, is that we more often say no to God's providence than yes, and for this reason we know also that if God is not our reconciler and redeemer as well as our creator, we are lost. God in Christ, however, is our reconciler, redeemer, and creator, and when our sexual lives are viewed from this perspective they take on greater significance than first we imagine. They become a part of the way

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in which we learn to be disciples of Christ.

The struggle necessary if we are to direct our sexual energies to their appointed and life-giving ends becomes, in Christ, a battle with an old self that refuses to honor God and insists upon its own way. In the power of the Spirit, this old nature must be put off and a new one put on. That old nature is driven by desires, some of them sexual, that are connected to self-serving ends. It is the teaching of the churches that both married and single people are called to say yes to this struggle and recognize it as part of the "upward call of God."

For most, a struggle with unfulfilled sexual longing is anything but part of an "upward call." It seems instead a destructive, repressive, and self-deceptive form of denial. It is the belief of Christians, however, that entry into this battle leads men and women away from precisely these life-destroying habits and stratagems and toward a life that is open both to God and to their fellow men and women. To say "yes" to life in the Spirit is in fact the only way to end self-deceptive denial and harmful repression. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth and life rather than repression and denial. It calls for us to present ourselves at each moment to God as we are, with as much knowledge of ourselves as we can muster, with all our desires and intentions exposed, and in so doing ask for guidance, help, and the transfiguration of our lives. God will not answer yes to many of the desires presented, but in saying no he will say yes to deeper desires and deeper loves—both for God and for the men and women with whom God has surrounded us.

God will also speak a word of forgiveness over our inadequacies and failures and in so doing provide us strength to be even more truthful and more compassionate. Sexual desire is a very powerful one, and at the moment it is given full license by our society. Everything that confronts single people conspires to say "just do it." It is increasingly rare for a single person, at one point or another, not to be involved in a sexual relation. In Christ, however, these relations need neither to be trumpeted nor denied. They can be brought before God, and as they are presented they will be judged with far more truth and love than we can muster. Another thing the churches ought to say to single people beyond "no" is come among us and present your life to God as it is. The upward call of God always begins from the place one starts and it takes place in a fellowship of friends who are also seeking to subject their loves to the truth and love of God in Christ.

This observation calls to mind another thing the churches have to say to single people about sex. Most people who enter even the most casual sexual relation are not promiscuous. They are, however, lonely. Beneath our disordered desires lies a loneliness brought about by a failure in the common life God intends for all men and women. The churches in America in many ways simply contribute to this loneliness. Their common life too frequently is not formed as a society of friends who share one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. It is rather formed around the needs and expectations of the bourgeois family. Single people at best are tolerated. Nevertheless, the view that sexual relations are intended for marital rather than general social relations is linked to the idea that close bonds between men and women, both single and married, ought to exist in all of life's dimensions. Because of these bonds, sexual relations themselves are not necessary as a cure for loneliness. What is necessary is the fellowship of men and women in Christ. This is the word beyond "no" the church has to speak to single people. If it dares to speak, it will find not only that its common life is transformed beyond all recognition, but also that its teachings begin to appear to single and married people alike as a treasure to be shared rather than as a burden to be inflicted.

This discussion of the pastoral task that lies before the churches suggests that the ethics of sex ought to be placed within the full context of the Christian life and the churches' pastoral ministry. Only in this way will what Christians say escape the twin evils of punishing legalism and boundless freedom. To place sexual relations in this full and more adequate context, Christians ought to understand them as part of an undertaking that encompasses all aspects of their lives. That undertaking is holiness of life and its end is not repression but joy unconfined. This is the heart of the Christian life and it is the chief business of the pastoral ministry.

Holiness of life summarizes better than any other notion what the Christian life and the pastoral ministry are about. The Christian life is rooted in the ancient command, "You shall be Holy for I the Lord your God am Holy." The holiness of life known to Christians is based first in the alien righteousness that is imputed to them. It is based not upon their purity of heart and life but upon their faith in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Holiness is also reflected in a way of life into which disciples enter more and more as, in the power of the Spirit, they engage in a struggle to conform their lives to the pattern of life they see in Christ Jesus. In this way they learn to imitate God and so share in God's life. One aspect of the pattern of life they are called to imitate requires that they honor God by honoring as well the way in which God intends for men and women to join their lives in and through sexual relations.

If holiness of life is understood in relation both to justification and sanctification, then sexual relations can be included within its compass without the repression and deception that so often accompany their discussion. Indeed, if we include sexual relations (and their absence) as part of a wider account of the Christian life, we will learn, as our lives are

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drawn further and further into the life of God, more about the undertakings God sets for us by making us male and female. In the light of these undertakings, all the promises we make to one another about our sexual lives will be seen in truth for what they are. In this process we will learn more and more about our bondage to self-serving and imprisoning desire. We will also learn more about what freedom means for us as sexual beings. We will learn more and more about the joys life holds when our desires are ordered to the undertakings God appoints for us. In short, if the ethics of sexual order and sexual liberation, which now contend so fiercely one with another, are joined to an ethic of holiness of life, we will learn how necessary each is to the other. FT

Black Spruce

From a distance
it looked like ordinary
wood, a snuff-colored twig

one might rake
for burning. Surfaced
by the bulldozer

from a sarcophagus of clay, it
could have been the brittle
finger-bone of a prophet, or a

phalange of an extinct ape
from another age. Black
spruce, the geologist says,

buried by the last glacier
budging across Illinois.
The branch lies cool

against the palm. You count
the rings in cross-section:
fourteen. One for each

millennia the tree was a secret
no one knew to tell. You
feel a rush of centuries

receding and for a moment
stand among its antecedents.
The conifer reaches for thin
blue sky, breathes

air full of promise.
In the silhouette
you see a tree waiting
for December.

William North

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The World's Oldest Virtue

Judith Martin

Whenever there is a contest between etiquette and acknowledged virtues, etiquette loses. Hardly anyone would dispute the proposition that morals are more important than mere manners, and the assertion that etiquette can and should be jettisoned for a higher good is commonly made and accepted in everyday life.

"I'm concerned about people's health," is a typical explanation offered by someone who admonishes others, sometimes even strangers in restaurants, that what they're eating is bad for them. The moral virtue of devotion to the well-being of others supposedly obliterates the rule of etiquette against minding other people's business.

"You want me to be honest, don't you?" has come to be the standard response from anyone challenged for the practice of telling friends that they look terrible, exhibit bad taste, give boring parties, or sing off-key. Although these statements are proscribed by etiquette, which classifies them as insults, they are allegedly permissible when reclassified as morally virtuous truth-telling.

"This is more important," an activist will declare when called upon to defend cursing passersby for wearing fur or leather coats, or scolding coffee-drinkers for using styrofoam cups. The moral worth of his cause on behalf of animals or the environment is seen as overriding the etiquette injunction against humiliating people.

Since expressing one's feelings came to be considered a virtue (under such names as assertiveness or self-esteem, which are supposed to suggest a laudable strength of character), simply succumbing to a desire to say or do something may be cited as good reason for canceling the claims of etiquette. A common justification for ignoring the etiquette rule against nosiness is the simple admission of curiosity. In those rare instances, nowadays, when someone who asks personal questions is taxed with invasion of privacy, the offender points out he was simply "wondering" or "interested in" what another paid for his house, why he uses a wheelchair, or whether he is planning to get a divorce. The justification given for almost any uncivilized behavior by children, including annoying other people and damaging their property, is their manifestation not just of self-expression, but of the creative spirit.

Even the failure to do something may be given a moral dimension that excuses ignoring the requirements of etiquette. Such omissions as not visiting the dying or attending funerals, and not sending thank-you letters in return for hospitality, favors, or presents, were once perceived as evidence of rudeness, presumably prompted by selfishness or sloth. Now the explanations ("I want to remember him as he was"; "Funerals give me the creeps"; "I hate to write letters"; "People should do things just because they want to not because they expect to be thanked") imply that there is virtue in the act of refusing to let the expectations of etiquette prevail over personal disinclinations. Indeed, these explanations imply that it is anyone who expects that distaste for the duties of etiquette to be overcome who is exhibiting a lack of compassion and respect.

In a bizarre twist, enforcing polite behavior has come to be considered a virtue that relieves anyone who engages in it from having himself to be polite. A new set of etiquette vigilantes who spot such etiquette violations as smoking in the presence of nonsmokers without their permission or refusing to extend road courtesies to other drivers will proudly report having used obscenities and threats in order to make the violators "mind their manners."

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Even among those who profess to value good manners (which frequently turns out to mean that they dislike being treated rudely without necessarily being willing to behave politely themselves), it is widely held that the decline of etiquette is a problem to be dealt with only after the panoply of more serious social problems has been solved.

But what if the decline of etiquette *is* one of the most serious social problems, from which other serious social problems devolve merely as epiphenomena?

Throughout most of recorded history, theologians and philosophers have extolled propriety and correct social behavior as virtues akin to morality. It is chiefly in this century that they have come to regard etiquette as a dispensable frill, at best; at worse, they have denounced it as a sin. Hypocrisy is the damning label now attached to any polite inhibition that disguises a sincerely held opinion or restrains a righteous impulse for action.

But I would contend that obeisance to etiquette, far from being a weak and optional virtue, much less a sin, is the oldest social virtue, and an indispensable partner of morality. Rather than being the crowning touch of good behavior in the upper reaches of a stratified society, etiquette is civilization's first necessity.

Since time immemorial, etiquette has been used to establish the principles of social virtue, as well as the rules, symbols, and rituals of civilized life. Historically, it preceded the invention of the law as a restraint of individual behavior for the common good, surely making etiquette the oldest deterrent to violence after fear of retaliation. Developmentally, it still precedes the teaching of moral concepts in the socialization of children.

Evidence of the prehistoric practice of etiquette—such as communal eating and ceremonial burying of the dead—has served to define civilization in its earliest manifestations. Yet there persists a widespread belief that etiquette arose from the desire of Victorian killjoys to ruin private pleasures, to quash the freedoms achieved during the Enlightenment, and to enhance the power of rich snobs over the proletariat.

This notion ignores overwhelming evidence that etiquette exists in primitive societies as much as—and often in more rigid forms than—in industrialized societies. Contemporary romantics are given to disdaining the etiquette tradition of their own modern culture, while waxing sentimental over similar practices in what they regard as more authentic cultures. But in present American society, etiquette rites are much more elaborate among the young and the poor (for example, in the dress codes, precedence systems, gestures of greeting, and modes of address in urban street gangs) than among the rich, who have increasingly abandoned the very aspects of etiquette that are of vital concern on the streets.

Morals and manners are not conflicting, but complementary, and sometimes overlapping, parts of the ensemble of fundamental beliefs and needs that we hold simply because we are rational agents blessed with practical reason. Moral beliefs include such concepts as duty, obligation, responsibility, and sacredness of the person, while manners include such beliefs and needs as communal harmony, cultural coherence, and dignity of the person. Ethics and etiquette refer to sets of imperatives commanding social behavior that derive their authority as rational prescriptive systems from morals and manners, respectively.

Hence, committing murder, which violates the sacredness of the person, is immoral, while causing humiliation, which violates the dignity of the person, is unmannerly. But such virtues as compassion, respect, and toleration are shared by morals and manners, and hence form the basis of imperatives of ethics, as well as of etiquette.

In many everyday situations where conflicts between ethics and etiquette arise, giving precedence to etiquette may be the more virtuous choice. The likelihood of bringing about a higher good, i.e., eudemonia, by rudely expressing one's concern for others' health, voicing unflattering criticism, and forcing confrontational consideration of moral issues is small (and, in some cases, such as the friend who sings off-key, nil). However, it is nearly a certainty that these morally righteous etiquette transgressions will cause embarrassment and hurt feelings, evils that manners seek to forestall. Is hypocrisy such a heinous sin that avoiding any small amount of it is worth sacrificing the feelings of people who had mistakenly assumed that they were pleasing others?

Conflicts may arise not only between ethics and etiquette, but also within etiquette itself, when contradictory rules may apply to a given setting. The same action may appear either necessary or proscribed, depending on the relative consideration given by the agent to various aspects of the situation. Complex judgment—wisdom—is then required in order to decide on a course of action that best serves the ends of manners.

Should patients show respect for their doctor by addressing him or her by title and surname if the doctor is calling them by their first names? Is the doctor doing this because he lacks respect for his patients or because he believes that the manners of personal friendship put patients more at ease? Suppose the patients are offended, rather than put at their ease, by this practice. Should they ignore it to spare the doctor embarrassment, or correct it on the grounds that they owe this either to their own dignity, or to the doctor, to let him know that he is producing an effect opposite from that he may be intending to achieve?

Has a boss who calls women employees "honey" given evidence of evil intent, in which case he should

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be properly chastized, or is he of good will but ignorant of social conventions? How long after customs have changed is such ignorance excusable?

In spite of the thoughtfulness required in weighing and interpreting one's own and others' actions in the interests of politeness, rules of etiquette cannot always be deduced from first principles. Persons who believe that etiquette is just following common sense in applying the mannerly injunction to be considerate of others fail to recognize that etiquette serves not only a regulative function, but also a symbolic and a ritual function.

Regulative etiquette is the most easily understood of the three functions, because it resembles the law. Both the law and etiquette provide rules for the promotion of communal harmony, according to the principles of morality and of manners, respectively. The law addresses the most serious conflicts, including those threatening life, limb, and property, and dispenses such fierce sanctions as fines, imprisonment, and loss of life for violations of its rules. With only the sanction of shame at its command, etiquette addresses conflicts for which voluntary compliance is generally attainable, and thus serves to avert antagonisms that might escalate into violations of law. In this respect, etiquette resembles international law, which seeks to avert war, but has only the sanction of shame with which to enforce its rules upon sovereign states.

Because both etiquette rules and laws are fashioned to pertain to a particular time and social setting, they are subject to development and change, albeit slowly because of their inertia due to tradition. However, the principles of manners and morals from which they derive their authority remain constant and universal. Even directly contradictory rules of etiquette prevailing in different societies at the same time, or at different times in the same society, may derive their authority from the same principle of manners.

Failing to take off one's shoes when arriving at a dinner party in Japan would show a lack of respect for the hosts, while seating guests with their backs to the most decorative part of the room is understood to honor them by having these objects serve as their background. But taking off one's shoes upon arriving at an American dinner party would be a demonstration of disrespect, while an American host who asks guests to remove their shoes in order to preserve the cleanliness of the carpet is disrespectful to the guests, by showing more honor to his possessions than to them.

Treating women courteously once required men to allow them precedence and offer them assistance, including symbolic assistance for tasks that even men knew women could perform unassisted. Courtesy now forbids men from offering women special precedence or assistance in the working world, where calling attention to their gender, and suggesting that it requires protection, puts women at a professional disadvantage. In the private realm, the old-time, gender-related courtesies still prevail, although they are increasingly falling into disuse. It is likely that precedence and assistance will soon come to be based solely on age and need, a system that creates new hazards by requiring people to guess these attributes in others who may well take insult from being categorized, accurately or not, as being old or helpless.

(Does this change in customs mean that etiquette authorizes a woman offered a seat by a man, or a frail-appearing man offered a seat by a robust youth, to snap out, "I can stand just as well as you can"? *No*, because the injunction against reproving the author of an obviously well-intentioned gesture is an unalterable principle of manners.)

Because etiquette is both voluntary and flexible, and thus able to prevent or settle a myriad of minor disputes that would otherwise have to be handled by the law, often after first erupting into violence, a complex society cannot operate properly without using both etiquette and, where voluntary compliance fails, law. This has been demonstrated in recent years, when a declining belief in etiquette as a legitimate force in regulating social conduct has prompted American society to try to get along without it.

Many Americans came to believe—and to put into practice—the idea that any behavior not prohibited by law ought to be tolerated. As a result, people who found rude but legally permitted behavior intolerable have attempted to expand the law to outlaw rudeness. For this purpose, they escalated the consequences of rudeness to bring it into categories that were already given serious attention by the law. Thus, any insult became slander or libel, meanness became mental cruelty, and annoyances from tobacco smoke or noise became health hazards.

This attempt to redefine manners violations as moral violations poses a threat to the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. Freedom of expression, as we understand it, is compromised when mere obnoxiousness is outlawed. And yet the very practices of a democratic state, including such governmental business as legislative sessions and judicial proceedings, cannot be carried out effectively if there are no restraints on the rights of people to disrupt them. That is why there is no unlimited free speech even in legislative sessions or courtroom trials where free speech itself is the subject under discussion. If everyone were allowed to talk at once, or if such provocative tactics as obscenities, personal invective, and a show of disrespect for authority were permitted, the very purpose of the debate would be frustrated.

Our educational institutions have had a difficult time with the free speech/etiquette paradox. This

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can only be resolved once it is recognized that an institution may insist upon adherence to etiquette in order to further its mission, without these restrictions on the freedom of expression at certain times and places necessarily constituting an abridgement of right guaranteed by law. It can allow people to attack ideas without allowing them to attack one another, and freely protect the discussion of offensive topics without permitting the use of offensive speech.

In the less easily understood symbolic function of etiquette, its rules are rarely deducible from first principles. Untutored people who raise such questions as "Why should I wear a tie when it doesn't serve any purpose?" fail to understand the rich vocabulary of symbolism provided by etiquette, which enables people to recognize essential attributes or intentions of others, such as that a man wearing a tie is treating the occasion seriously. Because the relation between symbols and the things they stand for is arbitrary, symbolic etiquette is a powerful means of communication. Even those who demand their own sartorial freedom from symbolism would not hire a defense lawyer who wore pajamas (which would serve the practical function of covering the body as well as a suit) to court, or submit to an operation by a brain surgeon who wore a Dracula sweatshirt in his consulting room.

In its ritual function, etiquette serves the sacred, as a means of satisfying those of our spiritual needs that make us distinctly human. It provides for the ceremonies and traditions that serve to bind a society and to make such chaotically emotional occasions as weddings and funerals solemn and orderly. The powerful hold that such rites have on people is evidenced by their continuance even when their sacred purpose is explicitly denied or subverted.

At contemporary funerals, some speaker usually announces, "We're not here to mourn [the deceased] but to celebrate his life." Yet the observance that follows is a variation of the traditional funeral, with the eulogies often given by laymen—friends or relatives—rather than by members of the clergy, for the good reason that these functionaries are no longer apt to be acquainted with the people whom they are called upon to bury.

Wedding rites originally intended for young women passing from their fathers' protection to their husbands' have remained surprisingly unchanged, even though the bride may be self-supporting, a substitute must be found for an absent father, and she may be surrounded by her children rather than her girlish friends. And yet the intent of the ceremony, in making the union of the couple part of a wider commitment involving family and the community, is often abandoned, as evidenced by the typical bridal couple's excuse for a lack of consideration for the wishes and comfort of relatives and other guests: "Well, it's our wedding, so we get to do whatever we want."

The attitude that the wishes of others do not matter is exactly what manners are intended to counter. And no one has yet come up with a satisfactory substitute for family etiquette training in the earliest years of life to foster the development of the child in such principles of manners as consideration, cooperation, loyalty, respect, and to teach the child such etiquette techniques as settling disputes through face-saving compromise. Within the family, the manners that are needed (although not always in evidence) are those associated with responsibility and compassion, rather than individuality and strict justice: care of the helpless, respect for elders and for authority, allotment of resources on the basis of need, empathy with the feelings of others, the accommodation of differences.

From the earliest weeks of life, when an infant is taught to control hunger in order to meet the sleeping needs of parents and to fit into a social pattern in which people do not eat during the night; through babyhood, where etiquette skills include learning conventional greetings such as morning kisses and waving bye-bye; to toddler training in such concepts as sharing toys with a guest, refraining from hitting, and expressing gratitude for presents, manners are used to establish a basis for other virtues.

The schools are not able to teach these principles, however valiantly they may try, because a mannerly attitude and etiquette skills are prerequisites for learning anything at all in a school setting. As a result of the ever-wider abandonment of home etiquette training, schools have become increasingly stymied by problems they identify as lack of discipline and commitment to moral behavior, but which usually mean the children's failure to recognize that communal goals may outweigh individual desires, and their ignorance of what is and is not acceptable behavior in the classroom.

Clinical psychology and the law have tried to compensate for the decline of etiquette training of children in the home. But they face an almost hopeless task, in that the language of mental health and legal rights obscures the discourse by presuming a world in which people's behavior is guided only by the rules of law and medicine. A society can hope to function virtuously only when it also recognizes the legitimacy of manners. ET

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The Skimpole Syndrome: Childhood Unlimited

Paul V. Mankowski

Let me re-introduce you to Mr. Harold Skimpole. Skimpole lives in the pages of Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*; he made his first appearance 140 years ago, yet those who are acquainted with the principal hierophants of New Age spirituality may receive more than a slight shock of recognition:

> He was a bright little creature with a rather large head; but a delicate face and a sweet voice, and there was a perfect charm in him. All he said was so free of effort and spontaneous and was said with such a captivating gaiety, that it was fascinating to hear him talk. . . . Indeed, he had more the appearance in all respects of a damaged young man, than a well-preserved elderly one. There was an easy negligence in his manner, and even in his dress (his hair carelessly disposed, and his neckerchief loose and flowing, as I have seen artists paint their own portraits), which I could not separate from the idea of a romantic youth who had undergone some unique process of depreciation. . . .

Harold Skimpole took a bright disdain for the drudgery of adult life—"I am a child, you know!" he frequently reminds us—and delighted in the innocent pleasures around him. Speaking of himself (far and away his favorite topic) he confessed to

> two of the oldest infirmities in the world: one was, that he had no idea of time; the other, that he had no idea of money. In consequence of which he never kept an appointment, never could transact any business, and never knew the value of anything! . . . He was very fond of reading the papers, very fond of making fancy sketches with a pencil, very fond of nature, very fond of art. All he asked of society, was to let him live. *That* wasn't much. His wants were few. Give him the papers, conversation, music, mutton, coffee, landscape, fruit in the season, a few sheets of Bristol-board, and a little claret, and he asked no more. He was a mere child in the world, but he didn't cry for the moon. He said to the world, "Go your several ways in peace! Wear red coats, blue coats, lawn sleeves, put pens behind your ears, wear aprons; go after glory, holiness, commerce, trade, any object you prefer; only—let Harold Skimpole live!

Thus we are given a prototype of the consummate pluralist, the besotted lover of *all* creation, the friend of peace, the man who can tolerate anything but intolerance: with malice toward none, with kindness and caring toward all.

The best insight we have into Skimpole's character comes from his encounters with creditors and their agents—what would for another man be called "financial embarrassment"—but of course Skimpole has no capacity to blush for any reason. He lives in the house of a wealthy and indulgent friend; even so, he manages to accumulate spectacular bills. On one occasion the narrator, Esther Summerson, is summoned to Skimpole's room and finds him, to her shock, arrested for debt.

> "Are you arrested for much, sir?" I inquired of Mr. Skimpole.
>
> "My dear Miss Summerson," said he, shaking his head pleasantly, "I don't know. Some

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> pounds, odd shillings and half-pence, I think, were mentioned."

The sum turns out to be more than twenty-four pounds—a staggering amount for the time, and it devolves on Esther and her friends to satisfy the officer and the debt.

> It was a most singular thing [Esther was afterward to reflect] that the arrest was our embarrassment, and not Mr. Skimpole's. He observed us with a genial interest; but there seemed, if I may venture on a contradiction, nothing selfish in it. He had entirely washed his hands of the difficulty, and it had become ours.

Drawing on their own savings, carefully accumulated through much ill-paid labor, Skimpole's acquaintances managed to placate the furious collecting agent, but Skimpole isn't through with him yet. "Did you know this morning, now, that you were coming out on this errand?" Skimpole asked him. "It didn't affect your appetite? Didn't make you at all uneasy?"

> "Then you didn't think, at all events," proceeded Mr. Skimpole, "to this effect. 'Harold Skimpole loves to see the sun shine; loves to hear the wind blow; loves to watch the changing lights and shadows; loves to hear the birds, those choristers in Nature's great cathedral. And does it seem to me that I am about to deprive Harold Skimpole of his share in such possessions, which are his only birthright!' You thought nothing to this effect?"

He is assured in emphatic terms that this was not the case.

> "Very odd and very curious, the mental process is, in you men of business!" said Mr. Skimpole thoughtfully. "Thank you, my friend. Good night."

Harold Skimpole never quite manages to lose his charm, and yet readers of *Bleak House* become increasingly appalled by him. He affects unselfishness, but is in reality fanatically, even maniacally, self-centered—existing in the soap bubble of an almost perfect solipsism. He insists in his sunny prattle that he is "a mere child," while he is fact a grotesque parasite: a colossal tick, a leech, a tapeworm with a taste for Mozart, who, it turns out, is childlike in his pursuit of pleasure, but shrewd and willful in his studied neglect of responsibility. His sensibilities are exquisitely tender, and yet he has a talent for causing pain, for making his benefactors feel slightly soiled by their own honest labor. He professes universal tolerance and sweetness to all, though is willing to put his friends through shame, fear, and harm rather than see his own comfort threatened.

The burden of this essay is to demonstrate that the Skimpole Syndrome is alive and well today, particularly (though not exclusively) in the world of religion. I want to show that the churches have been victims of parasites, most often quite charming parasites, and that the exhaustion and despair we see in the faces of our pastors can, to some extent, be attributed to the energy sucked out of their veins by cheerful co-religionists who mock their host even as they grow fat on his livelihood, his patrimony. The difficulty before me—no small one—is to convince you that the good things that our modern-day Skimpoles feast on are as precarious, are bought into being with as much pain and toil, as were the amenities of Bleak House.

The villainy of the Skimpole Syndrome does not consist in its choice of goods: papers, conversation, music, mutton, coffee, landscape, fruit, a little claret—few of us would argue that such things are inherently unwholesome. Nor is genial tolerance—"Go your several ways in peace! . . . go after any object you prefer!"—a bad thing in itself. The problem with Skimpolism is that it ignores, and refuses to acknowledge, the sources and causes of its own good fortune: the enormous human enterprise of toil, commerce, and distribution, the attendant fatigue, risk, worry, and vexation, the requisite virtues of foresight, prudence, honesty, and diligence—all of which are necessary for something as ordinary as a peach or a glove to end up in Skimpole's dining room. For the Skimpoles of this world, the ultimate source of bread is the baker's van, and there is no need to concern oneself with plowing, sowing, weeding, dunging, cutting, threshing, milling, and baking—not to mention the thousands of mercantile transactions, from mortgages to tire rotations—that must be in place, and continually attended to, so that Skimpole might have his honey on toast.

Skimpole believed himself set apart from other men by the fact that his needs were few. Of course, his needs were no fewer than anyone else's; rather, he was distinguished by his ignorance of his debt to prosaic necessities, by his confusing desires with needs, and by pretending that his wants were nobler than those of the multitude.

Consider, then, whether the following list of goods brings to mind a recognizable type: openness, sharing, compassion, diversity, dialogue, peace and justice, wholeness, growth. I am skating on thin ice here, and I know it. I should make it clear that I am not sneering at any of these objects, or the pursuit of these objects, as they are properly understood as components of Christian community. They are good things, and noble aspirations, and brave men and

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women have made heroic sacrifices so that they might be achieved and preserved. All this I insist on. By the same token, unless I am mistaken, this constellation of desiderata belongs in a special way to the Skimpole Syndrome of our own time, precisely comparable to the claret and newspapers and mutton that, to the mind of our perpetual child, simply came into being as gratuitously as sunshine and birdsong and warm breeze. The modern dream is just as illusory as the old, and decidedly more pestilent.

Take a fairly straightforward element in Christian life, the text of the Bible. Unlike the Book of Mormon, which is said to have been delivered on gold tablets by the Angel Moroni to the nineteenth-century copyist, the Word of God was not presented to Christians in final form. As Bible scholar Jon Levenson reminds us, there was in "biblical times" no such thing as a Bible, in New Testament times no such thing as a New Testament. Rather, the Bible was assembled over a number of years *for* the Church and *by* the Church—in particular, through liturgical usage and the ratification of bishops, who had already formed an inchoate hierarchy before the New Testament was itself complete.

Consequently, the Bible in the most physical sense—the written words on the page—comes down to us through two enormous efforts that overlap in practice though they are notionally distinct. On the one hand, the enterprise of copying, correcting, translating, and publishing texts—the business of scholarship; on the other, the enterprise of delivering to the Church an intact Old Testament and a New Testament that conforms to the mind of Christ: this involves setting the boundaries of the canon by choosing and rejecting among rival testimonies, selecting the best text of each canonical witness, suppressing additions and interpolations, suppressing mistranslations, and so forth. The human machinery—scholarly, administrative, legal, theological, editorial, custodial—that is engaged by the Church to put a Bible into our hands is beyond reckoning.

Not all of this machinery is especially gratifying to watch in operation. For example, it involves (and has always involved) censorship: the scrutiny of writings, the interrogation of authors of doubtful work, compulsory retraction of opinions found erroneous, and the suppression of those who refuse to recant their errors. Given the nature of their task, it is doubtful whether censors ever enjoyed great public esteem, but it is not doubtful that they cut poor figures today. Even in the civil sphere, the position of censor is not one that is likely to win invitations to fashionable parties or help to make an advantageous marriage. In an age with a warranted suspicion of bureaucracies and an unwarranted faith in the unconstrained intellect, censorship is seen as among the dirtiest of all dirty jobs, and for that reason alone is scorned by the Skimpoles.

The point is that the much-maligned structures of authority in the Church are as necessary to transmitting our faith as herdsmen are necessary to providing lamb chops. In the absence of censorship (and the sanctions that go with censorship) we would share no Bible, no prayer, no faith at all with the Christians of the Coliseum. Even the denominations that have minimal hierarchy and recognize no bishops have this reason to be grateful for those churches that do. Christians whose rule of faith is "by Scripture alone" are obliged to admit that the very Scripture they cherish not only produced the Church but was produced by it, and this production involved many of the very structures that they, several centuries later, were to find unscriptural.

And yet, the objection is frequently made, isn't it the case, once we have a firm and binding document—a genuine letter of St. Paul or a decree of an ecumenical council—that we can simply rely on the plain sense of the text to give us the teaching we need? This intuition is widely held, but the history of the Church shows us that there is no such thing as the plain sense of the text that is universally acknowledged—at least over time. It is simply impossible to lay the flooring of a document so tightly that someone, at some time, will not manage to fall through the cracks.

My favorite illustration of this point is the decree *Omnis utriusque sexus* of the Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215. It holds that everyone, of both sexes, is required to go to confession at least once a year. It was, however, interpreted by a monk named William of Newcastle to mean that yearly penitential duty is incumbent only on hermaphrodites. Now Brother William, obviously, needed someone to point out the error of his ways. His Latin, incidentally, was flawless; the problem with his interpretation is that it was insane.

The upshot is that every article of faith we have, no matter how obvious or how arcane it may appear, has run a gamut of fatal threats throughout the centuries, and has been vouchsafed to us, *multa inter alia*, by bishops and censors and canonists and judges. As Chesterton points out, if you paint a fence post white, and just leave it alone, it will eventually turn black. In the same way the teachings of the Church have to be reappropriated in every generation—unglamorous work!—and protected from contamination, neglect, and the random predations of those Williams of Newcastle that stalk the pages of the history of doctrine in every age like a recurring nightmare.

In the Skimpole mentality, all the effort required to produce his wants is mere affectation, and as such requires no compensation, and no respect. So Skimpole gives us to understand in narrating a conversation with his unpaid butcher:

"Says he, 'Sir, why did you eat spring lamb at

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eighteen pence a pound?' 'Why did I eat spring lamb at eighteen pence a pound, my honest friend?' said I, naturally amazed by the question. 'I like spring lamb!' This was so far convincing. 'Well sir,' says he, 'I wish I had meant the lamb as you mean the money!' 'My good fellow,' said I, 'pray let us reason like intellectual human beings. How could that be? It was impossible. You *had* got the lamb, and I have *not* got the money. You couldn't really mean the lamb without sending it in, whereas I can, and do, mean the money without paying it!' He had not a word. There was an end to the subject."

"Did he take no legal proceedings?" inquired [Mr. Jarndyce].

"Yes, he took legal proceedings," said Mr. Skimpole, "But, in that, he was influenced by passion, not by reason."

In the same way present-day Skimpoles are fond of saying, "I don't believe in a hierarchical Church. I believe in a God of compassion," suggesting, of course, that the two notions are mutually exclusive. When we ask, "Now how do you *know* that God is a God of compassion?" they say, "Why, because it says so in the Prophet Amos and the Gospel of Luke!" When we ask further, "But how do you know that Amos and Luke are reliable witnesses to the truth about God, except in virtue of the decisions made by those same authoritative structures you reject?" they reply, astonished by the question, "Because these books speak about a God of compassion!" And so we will have come full circle, while they walk away, shaking their heads over the fact that the orthodox are still guided by emotion, not by logic.

Let me stress again that I do not for a moment sneer at compassion; it is right to rejoice in the knowledge that God is all-merciful. Skimpole's worldview is defective not in the things it includes but in the things it leaves out, and the same is true of his contemporary counterparts. They speak of peace and justice and compassion as if the notions themselves were obvious and spontaneous, springing up in the minds of men with no more trouble than the wine and strawberries that appeared on Skimpole's breakfast tray. What they ignore is the overwhelming struggle, the sheer human sacrifice necessary for the Church to articulate and transmit intact even the most rudimentary truths, as truths.

Has it, in fact, been universally obvious that our God is a God of compassion? Not to those whose religious experience regards forgiveness as weakness—to the Nazis, for example. Jon Levenson has pointed out that, for the Nazis, what they prized as the "Nordic type" was "not only a physical characteristic but a matter of fundamental spiritual posture." "According to them, the true Nordic practices an ethic that is the polar opposite of the ideal of humility, subservience, and nonviolence that has so long been enforced by reference to the authority of Jesus." Their solution was to exalt the book of the Bible they found least offensive as communicating the "true faith" while pruning and cleansing the other parts of Scripture of false ideas. For Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg, the Gospel of Mark provided the true writ, other books having been contaminated by "womanish exaggerations" and "Syrian-African superstition."

More recently, Levenson suggests, feminists have begun to cleanse the Bible in precisely the same manner, based on the same appeal to religious intuitions—although these intuitions are, on the surface, at variance with those of the Nazis. Feminist thealogian Carol Christ sees the God of the Bible as a "God of war [who] stands for too much that I stand against." With regard to Drs. Christ and Rosenberg, Levenson has remarked, "It's hard to escape the conclusion that both are missing something."

Today's Skimpole is more likely to be a feminist than a Nazi, but both are indeed missing something—and not just a balanced picture of God. Both refuse to grow up; both insist on remaining "a mere child." Both have made the move "from the experience of religious authority to the authority of religious experience"; and to appeal to "the authority of religious experience" is a roundabout way of saying, "I like what I like because I like it."

Feminist Skimpoles are able to bring much of the heavy artillery of biblical scholarship to bear on their targets. In their lectures and articles and efforts to sift and winnow the Bible so as to expose the contaminations of patriarchy they may appear very sophisticated; yet once we blow away the smoke we will find that, at bottom, they are in the same intellectual position as a pouting child at the breakfast table picking the raisins out of the bran flakes. "I like what I like because I like it. I hate what I hate because I hate it."

Am I being too harsh? Bring to mind for a moment the people you have seen who conduct New Age weekends, or feminist workshops, or Peace Studies institutes, those who take glee in having "cut the knot" connecting them to patriarchal institutions, to structures of authority, to the unglamorous business of orthodoxy. Then recall the words in which Dickens first lets us glimpse the figure of Harold Skimpole: "He had more the appearance, in all respects, of a damaged young man, than a well-preserved elderly one . . . there was an easy negligence in his manner . . . which I could not separate from the idea of a romantic youth who had undergone some unique process of depreciation."

Skimpoles are, to my mind, a genuine threat to the integrity of the Church today. Their potential for harm comes in large part precisely from the good things in which they take delight. Let's face it: they're more attractive people than most of us, and certainly

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more attractive than the Vatican inquisitors—at least while the latter are at their tasks. They charm; they enliven; they amuse and provoke. They speak the sweet words of dialogue, tolerance, and innovation, while the authorities are obliged to talk of limits and penalties. They proclaim themselves on the side of freedom, and portray the curiales as friends of ignorance, violence, and repression. They fire the popular imagination, while I would venture the claim that never, in the entire history of journalism, has there been a sympathetic "human interest" profile done on a man who suppresses books for a living. Because they engage so many of our wholesome affections, because they have a media monopoly on the consolations of Christianity, because they are chary of speaking the hard truths of our faith, Skimpoles continue to win support from inside and outside the Church. And just as their prototype had a knack for making his benefactors feel guilty about their earned wealth, so the moderns predictably work to turn their sympathizers against the Church.

Skimpoles are incapable of gratitude toward authority because they can conceive of no error they need to be protected from; like spoiled children—precisely, in fact, like Damaged Young Men—they see all discipline as condemnatory and all condemnation as wicked. And, after all, who is more likely to despise and disparage his father's work: the teenager who bags groceries to supplement the money his father can spare him, or the coddled heir who draws all the cash he needs from a bottomless teller machine?

To stress the necessity of authority is not to say that it hasn't been abused in the past—it has, sometimes hideously—or that it will not be abused in the future. A man is not disqualified from objecting to another man's discharge of some office simply in virtue of the fact that he regards that office indispensable. That a father provides well for his son does not in itself sanctify the conduct of his business. The point of this essay is not to silence criticism, but rather to reawaken the recognition that when we do criticize the ancient structures of authority, we are speaking with our mouths full, and our plates have been piled high by the labors of hands not our own. For a believer to remain "a mere child" may add to his charm, but it deprives him of a prime lesson of adulthood: orthodoxy is no servility; gratitude, no indignity. F1

Contraries

Tell me everything you know, the sapient sage
asked the seeker, and, since the former was,
in his role, an editor, the latter filled page
after page of all that followed and preceded cause
and wherefore and why and when. Which he gave
to waiting world and bookman with a flourish, so:
here's the sum of all my learning, all I have,
the full measure of all and everything I know.
Which was all interesting enough, editor and world
said, but not really what we *all* had in mind:
the telling interesting things are what lie curled
away from what you first off easily, simply, find:
  go instead where you haven't gone; go fast or slow
  —return, if you will, and tell us all you *don't* know.

James Andrew Miller

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Review Essay

St. Evelyn Waugh

George Weigel

EVELYN WAUGH: THE EARLY YEARS 1903-1939. By MARTIN STANNARD. *Norton (1987). 537 pp. $10.95 paper.*

EVELYN WAUGH: THE LATER YEARS 1939-1966. By MARTIN STANNARD. *Norton (1992). 512 pp. $25.95 cloth.*

Many great novelists have had intricate, even prickly, personalities. But in Evelyn Waugh, nature and grace worked overtime to produce an extraordinary character, a full understanding of whose complexities would require the combined skills of an archaeologist, a psychiatrist, and a Jesuit confessor of the old school. Martin Stannard, a lecturer in English at the University of Leicester, doesn't quite fit that bill. Still, and with far more acuity than was evident in Christopher Sykes' earlier study, the multiple levels of Waugh's *persona* are laid bare and, in some instances, gracefully, even insightfully, explored in Stannard's recently completed two-volume biography. (The latter volume, which avoids the excessive Freudianism of the former, is in most respects the superior effort.)

Who, or what, was Evelyn Waugh? He was, touching but the surface of the man and his art, a brilliant satirist—one of the funniest writers of the century. But the humor was combined with a literary craftsmanship unsurpassed among his contemporaries (although Waugh himself would protest here in favor of Wodehouse). To take but one local comparison: Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* is a splendid dissection of contemporary American manias—race, sex, money, status; but for all its wit and insight, the scalpel of Wolfe's wit in his massive *Bonfire* cuts nowhere near the heart of American materialism's peculiar darkness so cleanly as did Waugh in his little novella, *The Loved One.* Nor does it involve any diminution of Wolfe's accomplishments to suggest that the difference between these two wildly funny authors is rather easily stated: Wolfe is a brilliant writer, but Waugh was a genius, and (at least at his work) a disciplined genius to boot. Indeed, Waugh was a master craftsman of English prose, arguably the finest since Henry James.

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Waugh was also a world-class eccentric, and it is to this dimension of his personality that many commentators have been drawn in the course of reviewing Martin Stannard's work. The fascination is understandable—Waugh's personality encompassed an astonishing array of idiosyncrasies that make the "personality" pap on tap in every issue of *People* magazine seem the very thinnest gruel by comparison. But the temptation to understand Evelyn Waugh primarily as a crank—a gifted crank, to be sure, but a crank nonetheless—should be firmly resisted. Yes, Waugh positively revelled in being outrageously politically incorrect. Yes, Waugh was terribly self-centered, and at times cruelly selfish. Yes, Waugh was a Great Pretender, much of whose later life was lived in auto-constructed physical and psychological enclaves meant to keep the world—and his fellow man, often including his children—at bay. Yes, he was, as Stannard writes, a "displaced person" by nature.

But to file Waugh away under the label "gifted eccentric" makes about as much sense as doing the same to Herman Melville. Or, to take another American analogy: no serious student of the work of Flannery O'Connor would suggest that one could grasp the essence of her inner life—and the wellsprings of her moral vision and her artistry—by meditating on her fondness for guinea fowl. The same cautions should apply to those who think they can get to the inner Waugh via his affecting to use a Victorian ear-trumpet in his later years.

Indeed, the most impressive achievement of Martin Stannard's second volume is that, almost despite himself, Professor Stannard has uncovered another, and arguably the deepest, level of Evelyn Waugh, beneath the satirist and the literary craftsman. Here, we meet Waugh as a Christian pilgrim: as a man with both an intensely sacramental apprehension of reality and a deep sense of vocation.

I say "despite himself," because part of Stannard's hermeneutic difficulty lies in the fact (which Waugh would freely admit) that in many respects the novelist was a very bad Christian, a man to whom neither prayer nor charity came easily. Still, Stannard is honest enough to have glimpsed this Christian and vocational core at the center of his subject, even if he exhibits a certain religious tone-deafness that renders his explication of his discovery more than a bit off-key at times. But a fuller exploration of the impact of Waugh's religious imagination on his art may be left to others: for we may be sure that Waugh will con-

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tinue to fascinate. Now, we can be grateful that Martin Stannard has, happily if somewhat clumsily, given us a new key for unlocking one of the mysteries of that enduring fascination.

II

Read as a whole, the two volumes of Stannard's biography clear the ground for a deeper exploration of the sources of Waugh's artistry by making it plain that an earlier concept of the "essential Waugh" was mistaken: his soul was not formed (or, more accurately, deformed) in the Oxford of the bright young things that Waugh memorialized as "Arcadia" in Part One of *Brideshead Revisited*. To be sure, this early Waugh, the aesthete turned chronicler/satirist of the flapper era, leaped out of literary and social obscurity precisely by limning his generation's follies in *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*. But these early works were in fact but the literary—and, more important, moral—prologue to Waugh's identity as a mature novelist: to Waugh as our most acute literary pathologist of the crisis of modernity.

To recognize that Waugh's literary genius was driven by a profound moral (and religious) insight into modernity and its discontents does not require, and in fact probably precludes, treating him with the well-intended *pietas* characteristic of the Sykes biography. For Waugh was many other things, too, including a shameless social climber, particularly in his early years. But the traumatic experience of being cuckolded and then divorced by his first wife, Evelyn Gardner, right on the cusp of his early fame, led Waugh, not into terminal cynicism, but to the conviction that (as Stannard puts it), "decline and fall were no longer the subject for jokes."

At first, Waugh experienced the disaster of his divorce in deeply personal terms: as he wrote Harold Acton, "I did not know it was possible to be so miserable [and] live. . . ." But his betrayal by "She-Evelyn" eventually crystallized in Waugh a broader and more literarily fruitful, if no less dramatic, vision: about his times, and about himself.

As for the times, by 1930 Waugh had come to believe that

> Civilization—and by this I do not mean talking cinemas and tinned food, nor even surgery and hygienic houses, but the whole moral and artistic organization of Europe—has not in itself the power of survival. It came into being through Christianity, and without it has no significance or power to command allegiance. . . . It is no longer possible, as it was in the time of Gibbon, to accept the benefits of civilization and at the same time deny the supernatural basis on which it rests. . . . Christianity . . . is in greater need of combative strength than it has been for centuries.

And as for himself, Waugh chose a place in what he regarded as the front trench of the cultural battle-line: rejecting both the comfortable agnosticism of his literary and social friends and the vestigial Anglicanism of his parents, he entered the Roman Catholic Church on September 29, 1930, under the spiritual direction of the legendary English Jesuit, Martin D'Arcy. As Father D'Arcy himself would note, Waugh's was a singular conversion:

> Few [converts] can have been so matter of fact as Evelyn Waugh. As he said himself, "On firm intellectual conviction but with little emotion I was admitted to the Church." All converts have to listen while the teaching of the Church is explained to them—first to make sure that they do in fact know the essentials of the faith and secondly to save future misunderstandings. . . . Another writer came to me at the same time . . . and tested what was being told him by how far it corresponded with his experience. With such a criterion, it was no wonder that he did not persevere. Evelyn, on the other hand, never spoke of experience or feelings. He had come to learn and understand what he believed to be God's revelation, and this made talking with him an interesting discussion based primarily on reason.

Waugh was thus under no romantic illusions when he became a Catholic. Given his divorce, he believed he was abandoning any hope of a future marriage (a belief that proved mistaken). He knew he would suffer the prejudices the English establishment subtly (and not so subtly) visits on papists. He was leaving the aesthetic pleasures of High Church Anglicanism, not for Chartres and the chant of Solesmes, but for the *déclassé* rituals of (typically Irish) British Catholicism. But Waugh believed that he had found, not a piece of the truth, but the truth itself: "I reverence the Catholic Church because it is true, not because it is established or an institution." And that truth would become the centerpiece of his vision of the world—and thus of his artistry—throughout the balance of his career. Dependence on a God who not only brought creation into being but sustained it with His loving care was not, Waugh once explained to the BBC, "a sort of added amenity to the Welfare State that you say, well, to all this, having made a good income, now I'll have a little icing on top, of religion." No, the faith was "the essence of the whole thing."

Waugh is frequently accused of having practiced a kind of snobbish Catholicism, and while it is true that he had no truck with what he regarded as the uncouthness of "liturgical reform," it would be unfair to suggest, as do some of his critics, that Waugh entered the Church because it was a more exclusive club than others that were available to him. Indeed, in his correspondence, Waugh reveals himself to be a man keenly aware of the Church as *ecclesia semper reformanda*; take, for example, the letter he wrote to Edith Sitwell on the occasion of her conversion:

> Should I as Godfather warn you of probable shocks

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> in the human aspect of Catholicism? Not all priests are as clever and kind as Father D'Arcy and Fr. Caraman. (The incident in my book of going to confession to a spy is a genuine experience.) But I am sure you know the world well enough to expect Catholic bores and prigs and crooks and cads. I always think to myself: "I know I am awful. But how much more awful I should be without the Faith." One of the joys of Catholic life is to recognize the little sparks of good everywhere, as well as the fire of the saints.

The charge of "snob" is also levelled in light of Waugh's polemics against the "Age of the Common Man" (a notion he pillories throughout his World War II epic, the *Sword of Honour* trilogy). But while Waugh clearly preferred the company of some social classes to that of others, his mature concern was less social than moral: he feared (and not without good reason) that the "Age of the Common Man" meant an age of moral vulgarity, exemplified in the later novels by characters like Apthorpe, Trimmer, and Hooper: "blasé, half-educated, insensitive bores who converse only in slang," as Stannard describes them.

But these mass-produced moral cretins were not only offensive in personal intercourse (which could, after all, be avoided); they had created a public moral climate in which it was increasingly difficult for the West to recognize, much less resist, the tyranny-masquerading-as-humanism that lay just over the horizon of Western decadence: the tyranny that eventually murdered the Kanyis, a Jewish refugee couple, in Titoist Yugoslavia at the end of the war trilogy. Or, as Waugh put it in 1946 in a preface to the American edition of his prize-winning biography of an Elizabethan Jesuit martyr, "We have come much closer to [Edmund] Campion" in the twentieth century. "In fragments and whispers we get news of other saints in the prison-camps of Eastern and Southern Europe, of cruelty and degradation more frightful than anything in Tudor England, of the same, pure light shining in the darkness, uncomprehended. The hunted, trapped, murdered priest is amongst us again, and the voice of Campion comes to us across the centuries as though he were walking at our side." It was a voice to whose call Waugh believed the celebrated Common Man would prove largely insensate.

Although it would be wrong to regard him as a "Catholic novelist" (in the sense that Bernanos, for example, was a "Catholic novelist"), Waugh's Catholic imagination—a sacramental imagination, really, in which visible realities are the outward expressions of an interior and invisible grace—suffused much of his later work: and in far more subtle ways than Lord Marchmain's deathbed sign-of-the-cross at the end of *Brideshead*.

One aspect of that imagination—its metaphysics, so to speak—was given voice by the protagonist of the war trilogy, Guy Crouchback, who, in the midst of a somewhat drunken revel, asks the Anglican regimental chaplain, "Do you agree that the supernatural Order is not something added to the natural Order, like music or painting, to make everyday life more tolerable? It *is* everyday life. The supernatural is real; what we call 'real' is a mere shadow, a passing fancy. Don't you agree, Padre?" (Padre: "Up to a point.")

That conviction about the reality (and Presence) of the transcendent bore fruit, in turn, in the serenity and humility which Waugh never achieved in his own life, but which he sketched in his touching portrait of Guy Crouchback's father, Gervase, a kind of human guardian angel to his son throughout the trilogy. Knowing that he is close to death, and troubled by his son's preoccupations with politics, military affairs, and the future, Gervase defines the transcendent humanism of the Christian worldview in one brief sentence: "Quantitative judgments don't apply." And in pondering that homely phrase, Guy begins to discern the sources of his own spiritual aridity:

> Guy's prayers were directed to, rather than for, his father [at the latter's funeral Mass]. For many years now the direction in the Garden of the Soul, "Put yourself in the presence of God," had for Guy come to mean a mere act of respect, like the signing of the Visitors' Book at an Embassy or Government House. He reported for duty, saying to God, "I don't ask anything from you. I am here if you want me. I don't suppose I can be of any use, but if there is anything I can do, let me know," and left it at that.
>
> "I don't ask anything from you": that was the deadly core of his apathy, his father had tried to tell him, was now telling him. . . . Enthusiasm and activity were not enough. God required more than that. He had commanded all men to ask.
>
> In the recesses of Guy's conscience there lay the belief that somewhere, somehow, something would be required of him; that he must be attentive to the summons when it came. . . . Even he must have his function in the divine plan. He did not expect a heroic destiny. Quantitative judgments did not apply. All that mattered was to recognize the chance when it offered. . . .

It cannot be said that, in his first volume, Martin Stannard handles the Christian and Catholic dimensions of his subject's intellectual and aesthetic vision with much grace. "The supernatural became his new reality," Stannard writes of the period after Waugh's conversion, "and he delighted in the scope this provided for anti-rationalist argument." But this is to reduce Waugh's Catholicism to a mere pragmatism: Civilization (which Waugh cherished) was collapsing; Christianity, and particularly Catholicism, were the most effective tools for shoring up the battlements; therefore, one became a Catholic. Q.E.D.

Happily, by the second volume, Stannard has achieved

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a less instrumental appreciation of Waugh's faith and its relationship to both his personality and his work. And he has come to that judgment through a distinctive analysis of one of Waugh's less-regarded works, which in turn opens up for the biographer, and for us, a new level of understanding of this naturally "displaced person."

III

Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years is far more aptly titled in the British edition, *Evelyn Waugh: No Abiding City, 1939-1966*. (Did the American publisher, W. W. Norton, think that Yanks were less likely to catch the biblical allusion than the pagan Brits?) The details are fascinating, as Stannard traces Waugh's war service (recklessly brave and recklessly undisciplined, in fairly equal proportions), his family life, his friendships, his nervous collapse under the influence of excessive ingestion of sleeping droughts (which eventually yielded up the novelistic self-portrait, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*), and Waugh's love-hate relationship with the United States. Here, too, we learn that Waugh was not only a literary lion, but one of the most financially successful writers of the century; moreover, he turns out to have been one of the most generous, handing over copyrights and stacks of royalty money to various charities, primarily religious ones. (Waugh's generosity was, to be sure, colored by his violent detestation of the income tax, and his determination to keep every penny possible out of the clutches of Her Majesty's Inland Revenue.)

Stannard also makes clear that Waugh's war experience further hardened his contempt for modernity.* Personal service in two of Britain's more ignominious World War II enterprises—the failed attack on the Vichy French garrison at Dakar and, far worse, the scuttle from Crete—led Waugh to conclude that "The English are a very base people. I did not know this, living as I do. Now I know them through and through, and they disgust me." That disgust was intensified by Waugh's service at the end of the war with Randolph Churchill's mission to the Tito partisans in Yugoslavia. Here, Waugh witnessed what he regarded as nothing less than the betrayal of yet another ally to the tender mercies of yet another totalitarianism. (Here, too, as critic Colin Walters aptly put it, Waugh abandoned his romantic desire to be a tough guy, a "hard man": "When he got to Yugoslavia and met the genuine article in Josip Broz Tito and Fitzroy Maclean, the brigadier representing Churchill, 'they shocked him with their toughness'"—that is, with their utterly amoral ruthlessness. On the other hand, Waugh had a far more accurate view of Tito than does Stannard, who gushes over the Yugoslavian Communist as "courageous, adaptable, [and] dignified . . . gifted with wit and inspired by a humanistic idealism." Really.)

Stannard's second volume also reminds us that, for all his incessant deprecation and mockery of America and Americans, Waugh was in fact of two minds about the trans-Atlantic cousins. At one level, of course, he was appalled by parts of the America he discovered in the course of a grand tour arranged by *Life* magazine. This was the America of materialistic, optimistic, Panglossian humanism that Waugh skewered in *The Loved One*: an America that was, on the one hand, afraid of life, and on the other, repelled by and in love with death. One suspects that Waugh could scarcely believe his own eyes when he read, in a tract entitled *Art Guide of Forest Lawn with Interpretation*, that "the cemeteries of the world cry out man's utter hopelessness in the face of death. Their symbols are pagan and pessimistic. . . . Here sorrow sees no ghostly monuments, but only life and hope." In truth, of course, here one saw that fact was more bizarre than the most lurid fiction. (As Waugh would note wryly in *Life*: "The Christian visitor [to Forest Lawn] might . . . remark that by far the commonest feature of other graveyards is still the cross, a symbol in which previous generations have found more Life and Hope than in the most elaborately watered evergreen shrub.") This was the America that was the apotheosis (so to speak) of modernity: modernity raised up, and thus reduced, *ad absurdum*.

But, oddly enough, it was from America that Waugh foresaw the launching of a spiritual revival that might, just might, reverse the decline and fall of civilization. Waugh was, for example, the editor of the British edition of Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*, and during his visits to the U.S. in the late 1940s he was deeply moved by the monastic renaissance then flourishing. "There is an ascetic tradition deep in the American heart which has sometimes taken odd and unlovable forms," Waugh wrote in his foreword to Merton.† "[But] here in the historic Rules of the Church lies its proper fulfillment. . . ." Waugh was also touched and impressed by Dorothy Day. After first twitting her by inviting her to lunch at what was then the best restaurant in New York, Waugh agreed to Dorothy's proposed compromise that they meet in a Greenwich Village trattoria, where a four-hour conversation ensued. Martin Stannard captures the symbiosis nicely: "Waugh encountered in Mrs. Day a personality as tough and autocratic as his own, yet infinitely less selfish—a disarming combination."

The result of his American tours was that Waugh became an early proponent of the notion that there might be a "Catholic moment" in American history and an

* Despite his undisputed personal bravery, Waugh's anarchic personality made him an impossible military officer. At one intelligence briefing during his early days in the Royal Marines, Waugh inquired whether it was true that "in the Romanian army no one beneath the rank of Major is permitted to use lipstick." In 1940, Waugh was charged with neglecting his duties during a training exercise; part of the charge filed against him was that he had been seen smoking a cigar and drinking claret. When pressed on this during a Court of Inquiry in 1945, he admitted to having been smoking a cheroot and drinking Burgundy, but demanded of the Court why he should be "run-in by an officer so ill-bred that he could not distinguish between these totally different things."

† The allusion to Prohibition, which the notoriously bibulous Waugh would have regarded as akin to heresy (indeed, as the result *of* heresy), was both subtle and unmistakable.

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"American moment" in the history of the Catholic Church. To be sure, Waugh's "Catholic moment" was not John Courtney Murray's (much less Richard John Neuhaus'). Waugh was essentially a monist in his vision of Church, culture, and state, and he would have regarded Murray's call for Catholic participation in the definition of a "public philosophy" capable of sustaining genuine pluralism as something of a low aim, at best. On the other hand, Waugh was convinced that "Catholicism was not something alien and opposed to the American spirit but an essential part of it."

He knew that the Church had enemies in the United States, and that they were on the march (in however peculiar a form):

> The shops all over the country seek to substitute Santa Claus and his reindeer for the Christ-child. I witnessed, early in Lent, the arrival at a railway station of an "Easter Bunny," attended by brass band and a posse of police. Just as the early Christians adopted the pagan festivals and consecrated them, so everywhere, but particularly in the United States, pagan commerce is seeking to adopt and desecrate the feasts of the Church. And wherever the matter is one for public authority, the State is "neutral" — a euphemism for "unchristian."

Yet, rather like Jacques Maritain, Waugh seemed to think that American "materialism" was not quite so ubiquitous, or so deeply ingrained, as the country's domestic cultured despisers or foreign critics believed. Forest Lawn was not the whole story — or even the heart of the matter. To those who looked on America, "half in hope and half in alarm"; to those whose understanding of American life was derived from "what they see in the Cinema, what they read in the popular magazines, what they hear from the loudest advertiser"; to those whose gratitude for the "enormous material benefits" they received from America was "tempered with distaste for what they believe is the spiritual poverty of the benefactor"; to all of these, Waugh had a simple, yet powerful, suggestion: come and have another look. For "it is only when one travels in America that one realizes that most Americans either share this distaste or are genuinely unaware of the kind of false impression which interested parties have conspired to spread."

Indeed, and in a manner that seems, in retrospect, touchingly innocent, Waugh concluded his essay on "The American Epoch in the Catholic Church" with a remarkable confession of confidence: "There is a purely American 'way of life' dreaded in Europe and Asia. And that, by the grace of God, is the 'way of life' that will prevail." And in the prevailing, American Catholicism would, by Providential design, assume "the historic destiny long borne by Europe" in the defense of the faith.

Sic transit gloria?

IV

Waugh fans have long argued, amiably, about which of the master's novels is the greatest. *Brideshead Revisited* has been calumniated by two generations of critics who object to both its piety and its lush, magenta prose. But even those who—rightly—esteem *Brideshead* may be frequently found arguing for the artistic superiority of *A Handful of Dust* as a work cleaner, more sharply drawn, more nuanced in its psychology. I would argue that a case can be made for the *Sword of Honour* trilogy as the apex of Waugh's literary craftsmanship: these are surely the finest novels to come out of World War II, and their morally driven vision of world politics, for all that it was hooted down by critics in the 1960s, has been proven remarkably prescient by the Revolution of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe.

Martin Stannard reminds us, however, that Waugh's personal favorite was none of these, but rather the 1950 novel *Helena*: perhaps the least well-known, and the least well-regarded critically, of Waugh's fiction. Was this a personal crotchet of the author's? Stannard thinks not. In fact he suggests that the character of Helena, the mother of Constantine to whom tradition ascribes the discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem, is the key to grasping both Waugh's sense of himself and his mature vision of the Christian life in the world.

Waugh was not modest about *Helena* in terms of his craft: on the dust jacket of the first edition he wrote, unblushingly, "Technically this is the most ambitious work of a writer who is devoted to the niceties of his trade." Stannard finds the claim audacious, but admits that there may be something to it: in its spare narration and crisp dialogue, in its deceptive simplicity, in the ongoing collision between myth and history that gives rhythm to the narrative line—in sum, in its subtle deprecation of literary realism as a mode of discerning the truth of things—*Helena* was, Stannard concedes, "a vital technical experiment, neither modernist nor realist, but postmodernist, metafictional."

But *Helena* was also Waugh's most intentional statement about the truth of Christianity and about vocation as the heart of Christian discipleship. As Stannard puts it, the satire of the early Waugh had been characterized by a "jubilant malice" that reappeared, to the applause of the critics and the crowd, in *The Loved One*. But even before the war the author himself was being driven by other concerns. "Purgatory obsessed him," Stannard writes, "the painful road toward his destiny as St. Evelyn Waugh."

For that is what Waugh had discerned he must become: a saint. Indeed, that was the destiny of all Christians, great or small. "Quantitative judgments don't apply." What counted was sanctity. Moreover, what counted was to discover the vocation by which God had determined how the individual was to be sanctified. That sense of vocation, and the Christian scandal of particularity to which Helena's vocation bore existential witness, was what attracted the novelist to the Empress: a

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choice Waugh later explained in a letter to John Betjeman, who had professed himself puzzled by the fact that, in the novel, Helena "doesn't seem to be like a saint."

> Saints are simply souls in heaven. Some people have been so sensationally holy in life that we know they went straight to heaven and so put them in the calendar. We all have to become saints before we get to heaven. That is what purgatory is for. And each individual has his own peculiar form of sanctity which he must achieve or perish. It is no good my saying: "I wish I were like Joan of Arc or St. John of the Cross." I can only be St. Evelyn Waugh—after God knows what experiences in purgatory.
>
> I liked Helena's sanctity because it is in contrast to all that moderns think of as sanctity. She wasn't thrown to the lions, she wasn't a contemplative, she wasn't poor and hungry, she didn't look like an El Greco. She just discovered what it was God had chosen for her to do and did it. And she snubbed Aldous Huxley with his perennial fog, by going straight to the essential physical historical fact of the redemption.

Waugh was never a proselytizer, but he was a committed Christian apologist. Thus *Helena* was not only addressed to those in the Household of Faith who were trying to discern the meaning of their own discipleship; Waugh was never a "religious novelist" in that sense of the term. Rather, *Helena* was also intended to be a full-bore confrontation with the false humanism that, for Waugh, was embodied by such well-meaning but profoundly wrong-headed naturalistic-humanist critics of modernity as Huxley and George Orwell.*

More specifically, Waugh wanted to suggest that the hollowness of modern humanisms had been born from the recrudescence of an ancient and toxic spiritual pathogen. Thus *Helena*, "metafictionally," is an argument on behalf of Waugh's contention that the modern humanistic fallacy is but a contemporary variant on the old gnostic temptation—exemplified, in the novel, by the emperor Constantine and his world-historical hubris. And the gnostic temptation comes down, at bottom, to the denial of original sin: which is a denial of the essential facts of life, especially the facts of suffering and death. The arrogantly ignorant Constantine puts it in precisely these terms to Pope Sylvester, as the headstrong conqueror heads off to his new capital on the Bosporus: "You can have your old Rome, Holy Father, with its Peter and Paul and its tunnels full of martyrs. *We* start with no unpleasant associations; in innocence, with Divine Wisdom and Peace."

And the only answer to this fallacy of mundane humanist utopianism, for Helena and for Evelyn Waugh, was the "remorseless fact of the lump of wood to which Christ was nailed in agony," as Stannard puts it. This was the emblem of our createdness and our redeemedness. Without it, Christianity was just a variant on the Mithras cult or some other gnostic effusion. With it—with this tangible expression of the incarnation and the hypostatic union—the window to the supernatural was open, and the "real world" and its sufferings were put into proper perspective: and thus made endurable, for the sake of the Kingdom.

Waugh returned to these same themes of incarnation and vocation at the end of the *Sword of Honour* trilogy. In this case, the man who must discover his divinely ordered task in the world is the protagonist, Crouchback, whose dreams of military glory have been overrun by events (and by the colossal incompetence of modern military bureaucracies, which Waugh lampoons as only he could do). But in the aptly named third volume, *Unconditional Surrender*, Guy discovers what his father's maxim—"Quantitative judgments don't apply"—means in his own life: as he accepts paternal responsibility for the illegitimate child conceived by his philandering ex-wife, Virginia, and the embodiment of the Age of the Common Man, the society-hairdresser-turned-media-manufactured-war-hero, Trimmer. The decision is another form of the Christian scandal of particularity and historicity: "My dear Guy," one of Virginia's friends protests, "the world is full of unwanted children. Half the population of Europe are homeless—refugees and prisoners. What is one child more or less in all that misery?" "I can't do anything about all those others," Guy replies. "This is just one case where I can help. And only I, really. I was Virginia's last resort. So I couldn't do anything else. Don't you *see?*" "Of course, I don't," came the angry retort. "You're insane."

About which Crouchback/Waugh can only reflect, "It was no good trying to explain. . . . Had someone said: 'All differences are theological differences'? He turned once more to his father's letter: 'Quantitative judgments don't apply.' . . . "

---

* Waugh's letter to Orwell acknowledging a gift of *1984* is one of the most impressive in his voluminous correspondence; it also sheds further light on Waugh's Christian vision:

"I have seen a number of reviews, English and American, all respectful and appreciative. . . . Please believe that I echo their admiration for your ingenuity. . . .

"But the book failed to make my flesh creep as presumably you intended. For one thing I think your metaphysics are wrong. You deny the soul's existence (at least Winston does) and can only contrast matter with reason and will in certain conditions. So you are left with nothing but matter. . . .

"Winston's rebellion was false. His 'Brotherhood' . . . was simply another gang like the Party. And it was false, to me, that the form of his revolt should simply be f------ in the style of Lady Chatterley—finding reality through a sort of mystical union with the Proles in the sexual act. I think it possible that in 1984 we shall be living in conditions rather like those you show. But what makes your vision spurious to me is the disappearance of the Church. . . . Disregard all the supernatural implications if you like, but you must admit its unique character as a social and historical institution. I believe it is inextinguishable, though of course it can be extinguished in a certain place for a certain time. . . .

"The Brotherhood which can confound the Party is one of love, not adultery, still less throwing vitriol in children's faces. And men who have loved a crucified God need never think of torture as all-powerful."

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Martin Stannard argues that "the story of Waugh's later life is the story of his agonized spiritual quest toward compassion and contrition." We may expect that the contrition came easier than the compassion, just as it does for many of us. But it is difficult to read *Helena* and *Sword of Honour* without discerning in its author the capacity for a great compassion indeed. Stannard also suggests that the "mainspring" of Waugh's comic energy was his "power to hurt." Perhaps that was true of the Waugh of *Vile Bodies*. But in the mature Waugh, the farce has been transformed into comedy, and the comedy has become indeed, for all the chiaroscuro shadings, a *divina commedia*. FT

Aceldama

Eternity is uncorrupted light;
the world proceeds by interrupting sight,
exchanging day and night.
Half the acts of earth avoid the sun;
much that's done
may be begun by day but end at night:
aborted, buried light
is customary here; it shocks no more
than does a war
such as the one we wage against the innocents—
supreme offense
receives its time of rest at end of day:
we get away
with most of what we do—or so it seems
in darkened dreams.

Millions, millions scraped out by the left
hand and the right. Rounding bellies cleft,
translucent fingers reft
from reaching hands. "Curettage" is the word
fit to be heard;
"killing by ripping the baby apart" is cruel
and seldom heard in school.
"Suction" pulls the nerves and bones away
like child's play,
like sucking a soft strawberry through a straw.
The moral law
has been "salted out": it comes out burned
instead of churned
and bears grotesque resemblance to a man
in a can.

The doctor pricks earth's salt into the womb
and makes of it a sour, corrupted tomb.
Authorities assume
that no soul has been poisoned by this cup,
calling up
the methods and anesthetizing sermons
invented by the Germans.
A final and emergency solution
is occlusion
through disseverance: life is cleanly blocked,
birth cropped.
The result looks like a Jew who's crawled
from Buchenwald
dead. Our instrument's the arrogance
of ignorance.

Devils entertained in darkness resemble
angels, and by nature will dissemble.
Saints, believe and tremble
as the world in dark and light revolves.
But life resolves
itself in light, and disobedience
is washed from innocence
like dark blood dabbed from busy doctors' fingers.
All that lingers
is the uncorrupted will of God in light;
no night
will turn behind that single, perfect day.
Burned away
is all that festers, kills, denies and stains.
God remains.

Kent Gramm

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Books In Review

Domesticating Darwin

IN SEARCH OF HUMAN NATURE: THE DECLINE AND REVIVAL OF DARWINISM IN AMERICAN SOCIAL THOUGHT. By CARL DEGLER. *Oxford University Press. 400 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Phillip E. Johnson**

IN THE BEGINNING, Charles Darwin explained how human beings evolved from animals by natural selection. One might have expected that this revelation would have a profound effect on disciplines like psychology and anthropology, and that the newly established link to animals would become the foundation for the scientific study of human behavior. Carl Degler tells us that, at first, the Darwinian agenda actually did dominate the human sciences. Darwin himself filled three chapters of *The Descent of Man* with arguments that the mental and moral faculties of human beings were derived from similar features of animals.

This explanatory project carried some extremely racist implications, however. Because he was determined to establish human continuity with animals, Darwin frequently wrote of "savages and lower races" as intermediate between animals and civilized people. Thus Degler observes that it was as much Darwin himself as any of the so-called "social Darwinists" who set the evolutionary approach to human behavior on a politically unacceptable course. "Thanks to Darwin's acceptance of the idea of hierarchy among human societies," he tells us, "the spread and endurance of a racist form of social Darwinism owes more to Charles Darwin than to Herbert Spencer."

Nor is a scientific grounding for racism the only unsavory heritage of nineteenth-century Darwinism. Degler also cites Darwin's theories about the intellectual inferiority of women, and describes how Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, employed Darwinian logic in favor of an ambitious eugenics program to improve the breed. It is not surprising that such doctrines were unpopular with influential social scientists like the Columbia University anthropologist Franz Boas—and his famous pupils Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict—who were dedicated to egalitarianism and cultural relativism. Degler rightly emphasizes, however, that the conflict of social science with Darwin involved more than just the use of Darwinism to support specific social prejudices.

A FOUNDATIONAL ASPECT of Darwinian biological theory conflicted with optimistic views about how the human condition might be improved. As Darwinism became neo-Darwinism, it became increasingly clear that the theory ruled out the Lamarckian notion of the heritability of acquired characteristics. At first, reform-minded social scientists had thought that "evolution" would allow improvements in races or groups resulting from a better social environment to be made permanent through inheritance. These hopes were dashed, however, when August Weissman cut off the tails of many generations of mice, thus proving to the satisfaction of biologists that changes affecting an animal's body or behavior during its lifetime are not passed on to its offspring. Sigmund Freud, a law unto himself, continued to embrace the theory that acquired characteristics are heritable, but reformers of lesser stature were constrained by the facts. As Degler puts it, they had to choose "between biology—which no longer could be seen as experientially cumulative—and culture, which was."

Of course, the reformers chose the alternative that fitted their social vision. Degler makes clear that the choice was primarily based on ideological rather than scientific considerations. "The main impetus [for the shift from biology to culture] came from a wish to establish a social order in which innate and immutable forces of biology played no role in accounting for the behavior of social groups. . . . To the proponents of culture the goal was the elimination of nativity, race, and sex, and any other biologically based characteristic that might serve as an obstacle to an individual's self-realization."

Degler serves up some delightful quotes to illustrate how extreme the rejection of biology was—for example, Berkeley anthropologist Alfred Kroeber's 1915 declaration that "Heredity cannot be allowed to have acted any part in history." The main rhetorical weapon employed on behalf of culture was to place an insurmountable burden of proof on anyone offering a biological explanation for some human traits or practice. "As Boas characteristically phrased it, if a biological explanation could not be conclusively proved, then culture must be the causal element." Behaviorism and egalitarianism were in, eugenics and intelligence testing were out. As the epitome of the transformation, Degler cites Gunnar Myrdal's immensely influential study of race relations in the United States, *An American Dilemma*. Myrdal wrote at the end of this book that "We have today in social science a greater trust in the improvability of man and society than we have ever had since the Enlightenment."

This optimism was purchased at the cost of a certain intellectual incoherence, however. Degler considers it profoundly ironic that social scientists became convinced "that human beings in their social behavior, alone among animals, have succeeded in escaping biology. . . . For that belief is accompanied by another deeply held conviction: that human beings, like all other living things, are products of the evolution that Charles Darwin explained with his theory of natural selection. The irony is almost palpable inasmuch

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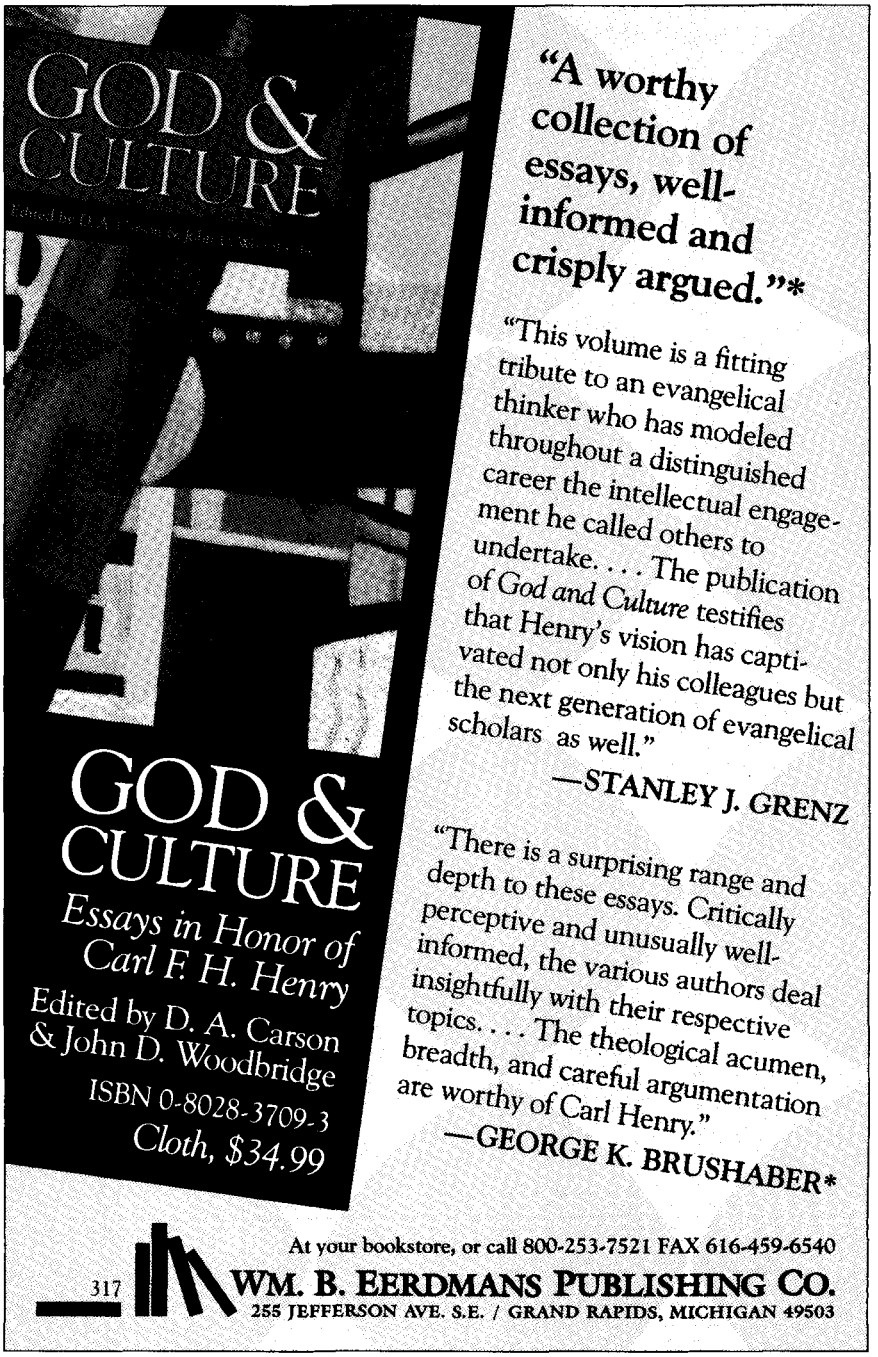
as Darwin entertained no doubt that behavior was as integral a part of human evolution as bodily shape."

Rejection of Darwinism in human behavior furthered the professional independence of social science from biological science at the same time that it encouraged visions of human perfectibility. On the other hand, social scientists have always wanted to be recognized as genuine scientists, an aspiration which requires that they somehow connect their disciplines to the rest of the scientific enterprise. The problem they faced after consolidating the triumph of culture was to find a way to reincorporate a certain amount of biology without allowing it to set the social science agenda or to impose limits on human possibilities. The obvious solution was to readmit biological theories of human behavior up to a point, but to keep them on a short political leash.

The second half of Degler's book describes a "return of biology" in recent decades that has featured figures such as Edward O. Wilson, Konrad Lorenz, Nicolaus Tinbergen, and William Hamilton. Degler insists that this renewed interest in biology "is not simply a revival of repudiated ideas, like racism, sexism, or eugenics. The evolutionary approach to social science has no more place for them than has the currently dominant cultural interpretation. . . . Rather, the true aim of these social scientists who advocate a 'return' is to ask how human beings fit into that which Darwin laid down over a century ago and which very few social scientists consciously repudiate—except when the behavior of human beings is included in it."

In short, the biologically minded social scientists know better than to repeat the heresies that led to the banishment of their predecessors. If there are any exceptions, they are tactfully ignored. Degler devotes no space to persons who have suggested that there may be inherited group differences in intelligence, for example. (Berkeley's Arthur Jensen appears only in a footnote, so Degler can explain that his work on race and intelligence testing does not draw upon "either sociobiology or evolutionary theory," but "is more properly seen as following in the tradition of psychological testing of the 1920s.") The possible existence of biology-based behavioral differences between men and women is discussed primarily from a feminist perspective, or at least by researchers respectful of feminist sensitivities. No one proposes a revival of the eugenics movement, or even feels the need to explain *why* a eugenics program is not a good idea from a Darwinian standpoint.

The political leash is so securely fashioned that it hardly ever needs to be jerked. Nonetheless, some voices of the left like Harvard biologists Richard Lewontin and Stephen Jay Gould remain intensely suspicious of sociobiology even when it comes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with a liberal spin. Their objection is not to the immediate political agenda of the sociobiologists, but to the inherent potential of biological theories of human behavior to provide comfort for those who think the existing distribution of wealth and power is "natural." As a result, biological theorizing still occupies only a marginal position in the culture of academic social science.

DEGLER IS ALWAYS interesting and informative, but it is hard to take seriously a "return to biology" in social science that is so severely constrained by ideology. All that seems to have happened is the spreading of a Darwinian gloss on the ideals of the priesthood of culture. What Degler calls "social science" is less a science than a secularized version of liberation theology. This secular theology can tolerate a biology that is obedient to ideology, but it dare not risk the kind of uncontrolled scientific investigation that might tell us something about human nature and capabilities that we would rather not know.

Darwinism was valuable to anthropologists like Boas, Benedict, Kroeber, and Mead because it did so much to discredit religious authority, and thus seemed to leave humans free to chart their own course in a world without restrictions. The cultural anthropologists, psychologists, and social engineers had to accept Darwinism to explain the history of life up to a point when human culture began, because they regarded theistic religion as so much superstition. But once Darwinism had served to liberate humanity from God, its continuing presence inherently threatened to legitimate restrictions on human possibilities by subjecting human behavior to the all-conquering power of natural selection. The reformers could tolerate Darwinism only if it respected the sacred doctrines of human equality and perfectibility, and paid its way by helping the visionaries to claim the authority of science. If evolutionary biology has indeed returned to social science, it is by way of the servants' entrance.

An Authentic Modernity

THE ETHICS OF AUTHENTICITY. By CHARLES TAYLOR. *Harvard University Press. 142 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by **Michael Novak**

TO GROW UP in Canada is to inherit a privileged position for understanding modernity—sufficently distant from that hurtling spaceship of "the republic to our south," while retaining (perhaps from connections to nature, to the history of France, and to Catholicism) a sharp, intuitive sense of what it once was like to be "premodern." A Canadian can more easily remain detached from capitalism, the spirit of commerce, and the fury of markets, sheltered as he somewhat is by the residual corporatism of medieval Europe and modern socialism. Thus a Canadian tends to associate the negative aspects of modernity with capitalism, its more positive sides to some inarticulate communitarian sense that is *not* capitalist.

The Canadian thinker Charles Taylor, in any case, is gaining status as the world's premier philosopher of modernity, the most judicious, the one who makes the most apt and discerning distinctions, the one who best sees both modernity's grandeur and its misery. I do not know whether he is what is called a "practicing" Catholic, or even what his spiritual disposition is towards Catholicism. He seems to know in his bones what it is like to have been a premodern Catholic, in love with the ancient philosophy of the Greeks, the Romans, schooled in the history of medieval philosophy, and well-informed about the twentieth-century French Catholic *ressourcement*. He retains a viewpoint larger than modernity (and thus able to judge it) while at the same time wholly committed to modernity (as one whose vocation it is to recognize

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in it a gift—and a challenge—from God). Analogously, the stance toward democracy in America assumed by Alexis de Tocqueville was not that of an English Protestant of bourgeois upbringing, but that of a man shaped by the history of Catholic and aristocratic France. To be in but not of the cultural world of modernity is to have a comparative advantage.

The original Canadian edition of this book, published during Taylor's sixtieth year, was entitled *The Malaise of Modernity*. Perhaps because the connotations of the word "malaise" are different in French and in English, perhaps because the word is virtually unusable in this context in the United States so soon after Jimmy Carter, and surely because Taylor expressly frames his book as a continuation of the inquiry nobly undertaken by Lionel Trilling in his Norton Lectures at Harvard under the title *Sincerity and Authenticity*, the American edition has been entitled *The Ethics of Authenticity*. But "ethics" is not quite the right word; in a way, "ethos" is closer, although not quite satisfactory either. What is really at stake is a fair judgment on modernity, an assessment, a fine discrimination of both its nobility and ethical allure, on the one hand, and its self-destructiveness, and self-flattening and demeaning tendencies, on the other.

The book consists of ten chapters of about twelve pages each, and although its argument is at times subtle, allusive, and demanding of full and total concentration, it also marches briskly along. The author inserts frequent guideposts to where he has been and where he is going.

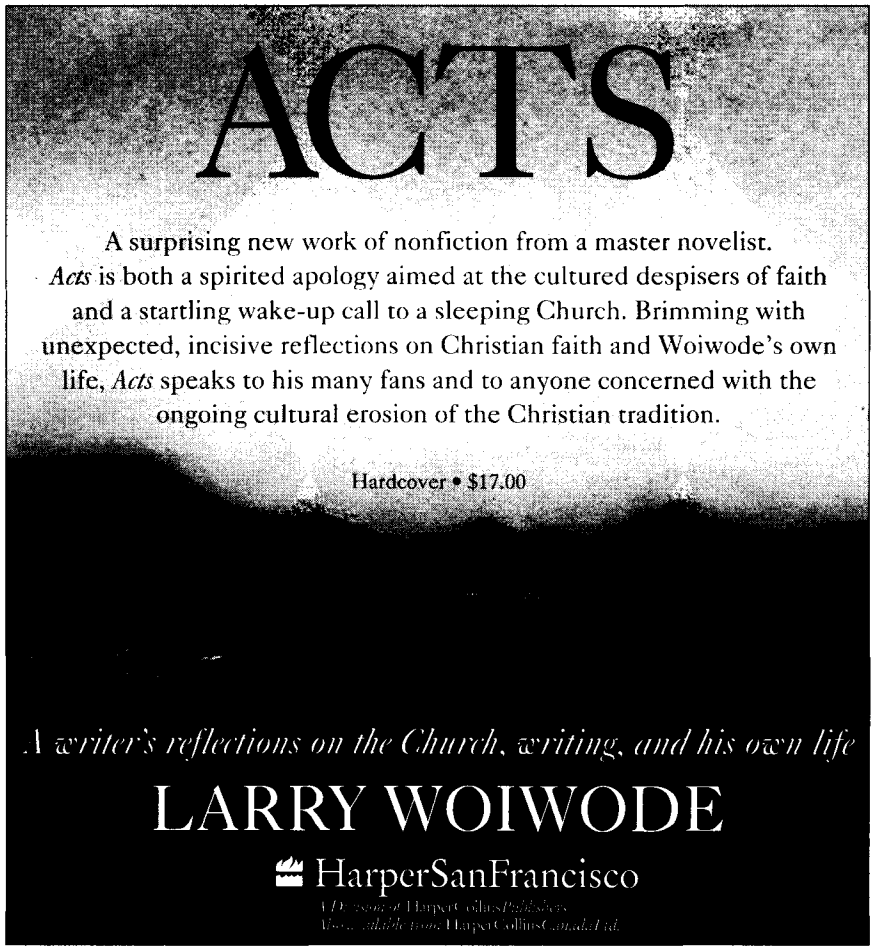
One of Taylor's contributions is to distinguish clearly among three quite different strands of experience—individualism, instrumental reason, and subjectivism—intending to show how each of these contains both destructive and creative possibilities. Actually he has time in so brief a space to analyze only one of these strands in some detail, and asks us to use this analysis as a model for completing the other two ourselves. He points out that each of these three strands has some aspects that attract us and others that repel us.

> What I am suggesting is a position distinct from both boosters and knockers of contemporary culture. Unlike the boosters, I do not believe that everything is as it should be in this culture. Here I tend to agree with the knockers. But unlike them, I think that authenticity should be taken seriously as a moral ideal. I differ also from the various middle positions, which hold that there are some good things in this culture (like greater freedom for the individual), but that these come at the expense of certain dangers (like a weakening of the sense of citizenship), so that one's best policy is to find the ideal point of trade-off between advantages and costs.

The picture I am offering is rather that of an ideal that has degraded but that is very worthwhile in itself, and indeed, I would like to say, unrepudiable by moderns. So what we need is neither root-and-branch condemnation nor uncritical praise; and not a carefully balanced trade-off. What we need is a work of retrieval, through which this ideal can help us restore our practice.

To go along with this, you have to believe three things, all controversial: (1) that authenticity is a valid idea; (2) that you can argue in reason about ideals and about the conformity of practices to these ideals; and (3) that these arguments can make a difference.

How to fashion such a position is,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of course, a work of reason. Here is Taylor's enduring contribution. His appeal to reasoned judgment is traditional enough, but to make this appeal against the howling winds of relativism so characteristic of modernity is to do the traditional thing in a new and "authentic" way. As Trilling has pointed out, the ancients knew very well the value of sincerity (*sine* + *cere* = "true marble without addition of wax," i.e., honest work). In their way, the ancients recognized the difference between learning ethical rules by rote and truly appropriating them—making them one's own—in the concrete struggles of the agora and the battlefield. But in making things "their own" they did not have to do so in loneliness, *on* their own; the rules were publicly agreed upon. The full force of what we today mean by "authenticity" was, therefore, unknown before the modern period. But recognizing many hints, portents, anticipations, and incompletely self-conscious foreshadowings of our predicament even among the ancients, one hates to be apodictic about this.

To repeat, Taylor by his own lights needs to show that one can offer telling reasons for one's discriminations, and he does so with a brilliant maneuver. One thing modernity certainly requires, he points out, is an awareness of personal identity different from that of all others, an acute self-consciousness. Very well, then, how can one answer the question, "Who am I?" without searching through the stream of memory in order to select out those items that one deems "significant" to one's identity? But how can one do this without appealing to various reasons for declaring one thing "significant," and another not? In this way, the question "Who am I?" is a question of, by, and for reason. You can go ahead and just be, if you want to, but the moment you rise to the fully human activity of "living an examined life," you must invoke the rules and standards of reasoned judgment.

TAYLOR NEXT shows that this effort at self-examination is always, and must be, dialogic: we learn how to understand ourselves through conversation—through being variously perceived, understood, and judged by others, and in turn learning how to perceive, understand, and judge in our own right.

A book of 120 pages can hardly do justice to the complexity of the matters being discussed, and Taylor could scarcely have succeeded, if he had not in *Sources of the Self* (1989) earned his way through scores of other useful distinctions. Unlike Bernard Lonergan or Alasdair MacIntyre, it would be misleading to describe Taylor as an Aristotelian or a Thomist; but it would also be quite wrong to overlook the ways in which he puts Aristotelian and Thomistic distinctions to work for him. Like Lonergan and MacIntyre, he understands the importance of keeping modern consciousness open to critical reason, to the eros of the pursuit of an accurate and true grasp of reality, to public claims of beauty and justice, and even to God.

Taylor draws easily and confidently on literature and art to display the contours and hidden turns of modern consciousness—oddly enough, rather like Richard Rorty. But he has a deeper and richer philosophical mind than Rorty's, not so "merely" modern, and not so limited in its appreciation of what came before the modern.

In a certain sense, moreover, Taylor is working in disguise. The followers of the philosopher Leo Strauss are fond of saying that John Locke was not as religious as he seemed; rather, he employed religious language in order to persuade religious hearers. It seems to me that Taylor is often doing the reverse. He writes as if he were less religious, and less traditional, than he is. While convincing us that he is authentically modern, and on the whole happy about that (although rightly worried), he never quite gives his whole heart, mind, and soul to modernity. That is the way it must be with ethics, even regarding authenticity. Let me put this another way. Taylor is actually trying to reach, as best he can, the truth about modernity, and to do so in a wholly modern way. He is subverting modernity from within. He sees both its dangers and its true possibilities. He recovers it for reason. His is, then, as promised, a work of retrieval.

The Complexities of Natural Law

NATURAL LAW THEORY: CONTEMPORARY ESSAYS. Edited by ROBERT P. GEORGE. *Clarendon/Oxford University Press. 371 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by **David Solomon**

A FEW YEARS AGO I appeared on "Firing Line" with my Notre Dame colleagues Gerhardt Niemeyer and Ralph McInerny for a discussion of natural law. My memory of that occasion is vivid: our attempt to discuss the possibilities for the theory of natural law in the contemporary intellectual climate was frustrated throughout by the way we seemed to be talking about three different subjects. Father Niemeyer approached the topic of natural law as if it essentially concerned moral objectivity, and, from his point of view, Kant was as much a defender of the theory of natural law as Suarez; McInerny and I quibbled about how much of the specifically Thomist project can still be defended; and William F. Buckley, the host of the program, was primarily concerned about whether a natural law argument could be mounted to show that the progressive income tax was unjust. In short, we spent most of the program simply talking past one another.

I was reminded of the frustrations of this discussion by Professor Robert George's superb collection of original essays on natural theory. Professor George somehow convinced many of the leading participants in the contemporary discus-

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sion of natural law to contribute to this collection, and he is to be commended. Nevertheless, one comes away from reading it with the impression that at the heart of the contemporary debate about natural law there is not a single set of relatively well-defined issues, but rather a complicated, and sometimes confusing, set of problems and queries that intersect at odd angles. The collection, to be sure, is none the worse for this, representing so perfectly as it does the untidy state of the current discussion.

Among the issues that come up for discussion is the ancient question of the relation between virtue and law—a particularly important issue for natural lawyers, of course, because of the complicated historical relation of Thomism to its Greek and Hebrew roots. Notoriously, the natural law theory of Aquinas brings together two traditions of ethical thought in a synthesis that many persons since have thought illegitimate. Aquinas drew on the then newly discovered Aristotelian texts to develop an ethical theory of a deeply eudaimonistic sort, emphasizing the teleological structure of ethical thought and placing the concept of virtue at the center of his picture of the successful human life. This classical Greek picture, however, is laid over the more legalistic picture of the successful life found in the Hebrew Scriptures (as well as in Roman and, later, canon law). One aspect of Aquinas' great achievement in ethics is that he developed a theoretical setting in which the cardinal virtues can live comfortably (or so it seemed to him) alongside the Decalogue.

But this synthesis has seemed to some to be unstable; natural law theories have tended to lean more in the direction either of Aristotle and the virtues or of the Old Testament and the law. Professor Joseph Boyle's contribution to this volume comes down clearly on the side of law, arguing that while the concept of virtue must certainly play a key role in any natural law theory, it must be less fundamental than that played by the concept of law. His paper is especially useful in that it precisely attempts to sort out the relation between "virtue theories" in ethics—discussion of which are now much in the air thanks to the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and other neo-Aristotelians—and more traditional natural law theories.

Professor Russell Hittinger takes up the same issues but with a concern directly contrary to Boyle's. While Boyle aims to preserve law from corruption by the virtues, Hittinger fears that developing a concept of law prior to that of personal excellence as embodied in the virtues will yield an account of law too thin, really, to inform human life. Making law prior to virtue or, in the jargon of contemporary ethics, the right prior to the good, might in-

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deed be regarded as the abiding vice of political liberalism.

In addition, Hittinger's article—as do a number of other articles in this collection—focuses on what one might call "the metaphysical issue" concerning natural law theory. One might call it so, that is, were it not for the fact that there are a number of issues deserving of this characterization.

One of these concerns what has come to be called the "new natural law theory"—associated with the works of Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, whose 1982 book, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, provides the most complete presentation of the view (although, as Finnis and Boyle generously point out, Grisez arrived at the view first). Finnis and his friends claim that the natural law theory as originally developed by St. Thomas was hijacked by later moral theologians who add to it certain accretions of argumentation that distort its original intent. Finnis attributes to the hijackers the view that Thomist theory claims that the natural law is somehow deduced from certain metaphysical features of the world, in particular a metaphysical account of the human agent and his natural end. Finnis argues that this distortion was fatal to natural law theory because it left the theory vulnerable to later objections, classically stated by Hume, which charge that in this transition from metaphysics to law there is a breach of a logical gap between fact and value—or the descriptive and the normative. If natural law theory is what the revisionists say it is, then Hume and his followers are right: it has at its core a simple logical fallacy. Finnis argues, however, that the revisionists are wrong; Aquinas in fact held the view that the first principles of natural law, far from being derived from metaphysical features of the world, are instead self-evident. If they are self-evident, then Humean charges are irrelevant and natural law theory can avoid what many regard as the most serious modern objection to it.

This view, brilliantly deployed and defended by Finnis et al., has not, however, in recent years carried all before it. More traditional Thomists like Ralph McInerny, Vernon Bourke, Henry Veatch, Ernest Fortin and others (sometimes referred to as "Thomheads" by the more enthusiastic and irreverent of Finnis' aficionados) have challenged the "new view" on both historical and systematic grounds. They argue that Finnis has taken the so-called fact-value problem on board just when most philosophers (including many who are not special friends of natural law) are jettisoning it. The ensuing debate has become very complicated, with parties on both sides combing Question 94 of the I-II of the *Summa* looking for some smoking gun that will polish off their opponents. In my view, the "Thomheads" have had slightly the better of this argument, but the issues continue to be vigorously contested with ingenuity and determination on both sides.

A NUMBER OF PIECES in the George collection are devoted to this controversy. Professor Neil MacCormick, for instance, gives the best brief summary I have seen of Finnis' view and explains how an old legal positivist like himself is almost persuaded. Finnis himself contributes a piece in which he seeks to show the superiority of his own view to certain other current jurisprudential theories, including those of the Critical Legal Studies movement and of Ronald Dworkin. And Professor George, a longtime defender of the Finnis view, examines the criticism of this view by McInerny and others who claim that the Finnis position completely severs an account of human nature from its account of morality. George argues that, while the Finnis view does entail that "our knowledge of basic human goods and moral norms need not, and logically cannot, be deduced, inferred, or (in any sense that a logician would recognize) derived from facts about human nature," this does not mean that these goods and norms are not grounded in human nature in some looser sense.

The debate between Finnis and his opponents does not exhaust the metaphysical questions taken up in this volume. Many of the papers examine the more general question of how much classical metaphysics is required for any adequate defense of natural law. Natural law thinking emerged in the ancient world in the context of a certain teleological conception of the world. Natural law binds us, according to the earliest Stoic conception, because it tells us how to move toward our final end—i.e., how to become fully what we are only potentially. The decline in natural law thinking after the seventeenth century is often explained by the steady erosion of this teleological picture of the world under the pressure of the new science. Alasdair MacIntyre has argued in his influential *After Virtue* that it was the collapse of this teleological picture that made a classical defense of morality impossible and that led to the fatuous and ultimately failed enlightenment attempts to defend morality in a world devoid of natural ends.

Modern rationalist thought, however, has attempted to preserve the force and objectivity of traditional moral thought without what it regards as the needless baggage of traditional metaphysics. This goal, pursued most brilliantly and influentially by Kant and his disciples, often involves invoking the notion of natural law. But this modern resort to the concept of natural law does not require that such laws be teleologically grounded. That is, it doesn't require that natural laws link certain actions with certain natural human ends. This goal of "natural law without nature," as one might call it, continues to drive many contemporary research programs in ethics and politics. Even MacIntyre declared in *After Virtue* that classical ethical thought had to be revived without the aid of Aristotle's "metaphysical biology" (although his more recent writings suggest that he might not insist on that point today).

A NUMBER OF papers in this volume touch on this issue in different ways.

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Russell Hittinger, one of the most prominent critics of Finnis' view, represents the more traditional position and argues persuasively that, without the support of a well-defined classical metaphysical position, natural law theory will be at sea. Michael Moore, disagreeing radically with Hittinger, argues most curiously that to be a natural lawyer is just to be, in the jargon of contemporary ethical theory, a moral realist. Moore's paper defends what we might call the metaphysically minimalist position. A natural law theory, according to Moore, is just the view that there are some real properties in nature that somehow support the truth of moral judgments. These properties need not be of a broadly teleological sort, and indeed Moore seems confident that any teleological view is bound to fail.

Jeremy Waldron's contribution—largely an attack on Moore—takes up a difficulty particularly evident in Moore's paper: a kind of confusion, as philosophers would put it, between metaphysical and epistemological considerations. Moore wants law to be metaphysically anchored in nature (albeit a rather anemic nature) because he fears that if it is not so anchored we cannot have genuine knowledge of it. He is afraid of epistemological skepticism with regard to the law and proposes to halt any skeptical drift by dropping, so to speak, a metaphysical anchor. As Waldron points out, however, the attempt to create epistemological warrant from metaphysical postulates is a particularly barren kind of alchemy.

It may or may not be the case that genuine knowledge of the law is possible only if moral realism is true, but it is certainly not the case that moral realism guarantees that genuine knowledge of the law is humanly possible. This latter claim fails because it might easily be the case that morality is "written in nature," but we lack the capacity (because of original sin, a corrupt environment, or simple obtuseness) to discern it. Moore's view is sufficiently complex that it is difficult to decide whether he is guilty of this simple confusion, and in a lengthy appendix to his paper he attempts to rebut Waldron's claim, but Waldron makes a compelling case that he is guilty as charged.

Jeffrey Stout goes even farther than Waldron in trying to defuse the realism issue. He appeals to recent work in the philosophy of science to argue generally that we do not need a thick metaphysical account of an area in order to warrant the use of the notion of truth in that area. Such contemporary anti-realists as Bas Van Frassen and Arthur Fine are invoked by Stout in defense of this claim. His position, an increasingly common one among philosophers, draws on an understanding of the role of the notion of truth in science to illuminate its role in ethics. He argues that Van Frassen, Fine, and others have shown that if one gives up scientific realism (roughly, the belief that scientific claims represent something real and independent of the observing subject) one need not

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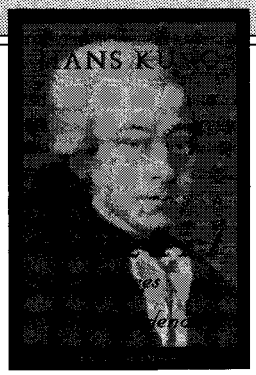

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give up the (serious) use of the word "truth" to describe these claims. If this is plausible in science, why not in ethics? What is implied here is that we are driven to "heavy breathing" metaphysics because we want to be able to say (seriously) that some of our moral beliefs are true—and mean, really mean, that they are true. But, Stout suggests, might not we be asking for too much? Can't we find a notion of truth that allows us to take our moral beliefs seriously without committing us to some baroque metaphysical theory that populates reality with queer moral properties? The answer, for Stout, is yes—yes in science as well as in ethics. As he says:

> I am objecting . . . to the idea that we need a theory of moral truth in a sense that transcends the result of both descriptive anthropology and ordinary moral deliberation. Descriptive anthropology tells us how the term "true" functions in moral discourse. Ordinary moral deliberation tells us which moral sentences we have good reason to deem true *in media res*. I see neither the need for more than this nor the likelihood that trying for more will end outside the Serbonian bog.

Stout would go farther than Waldron, then, at least in these papers. Waldron argues that metaphysical realism is not sufficient for moral knowledge; Stout claims that metaphysical realism is not even necessary for our ordinary notion of truth. We can be comfortable with the thought that our moral claims are true while dumping any metaphysical baggage that thought may appear to bring on board.

In many ways the issues raised in this series of papers are the most important issues in contemporary philosophy. At stake is the question of whether the various kinds of reductionist theories on offer in modernity can accommodate our deepest thoughts and beliefs about the good, the true, and the beautiful. Some people, to be sure, are not interested in the outcome of this discussion, since they have determined that they will either hang onto their pre-theoretical beliefs come what may or they will hang onto their reductionist theories no matter what mutilation these theories inflict on our moral, aesthetic, or epistemological beliefs. For others, though, the issues are of the first importance. If one wants not only to hold onto one's moral beliefs come what may, but wants to hold onto them because they are true (or at least because one believes them to be true), then one must care about what else one must believe in order to believe that they are (really!) true. Hittinger thinks one must believe a lot more; Stout, hardly anything more. Such disagreements are certainly not resolved in this volume, but the materials for important and interesting defenses of the various possible positions are put into place. Thus for anyone who might still believe that natural law theory is merely a relic of bygone days, discussion of which is kept alive by aging seminary professors and benighted religious traditions, Professor George's book provides an indispensable antidote.

The Homesick Homeless

PILGRIM IN THE RUINS: A LIFE OF WALKER PERCY. By JAY TOLSON. *Simon & Schuster. 544 pp. $27.50.*

Reviewed by **Molly Finn**

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE the biographer faces is to grasp and reveal the inner life of his subject. His task is simplified when he chooses a subject visibly engaged in great public events of his time—wars, politics, social reform, for example. If the biographer is good at what he does, he will use these public activities to illuminate the inner life of his subject while using that same inner life—the subject's genius, if you will—to illuminate great events of his time. Each fact used, each incident related, must contribute to a vivid picture of a person the reader will feel he knows when he has finished the book. The less speculation the author engages in, and the more concretely he documents his subject's life, the livelier this sense of knowledge will be.

MOLLY FINN *is a writer living in New York City.*

In Walker Percy (1916-1990), novelist, philosopher, Southern gentleman, Jay Tolson has chosen a most difficult subject. Aside from some involvement in the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s—and even that was pretty marginal—Percy's life was almost entirely inward. He sought privacy and lived out of the public eye. In 1948, when he found Covington, the little suburb of New Orleans where he lived until his death, he said, "I took one look around, sniffed the ozone, and exclaimed—unlike Brigham Young—'This is the nonplace for me!'" In this "nonplace" Percy wrote his eight books (six novels and two collections of essays), raised his two daughters, suffered what he called "middle-aged depression . . . plus a Percyean disposition toward melancholia," drank too much bourbon, listened to a lot of music, and lived in close, complex, and harmonious companionship with his wife, Bunt.

In this biography, Jay Tolson reveals an admirable understanding of the ideas and traditions underlying Percy's work and a moving admiration for Percy's achievement. Unfortunately, however, he seems to feel that he must conscientiously report every fact known about Percy's ancestors and about his relatively uneventful life, including details about pets, picnics, weekend trips, and the like that contribute little to our knowledge of the real Walker Percy. It is also unfortunate that he relies so heavily on paraphrase: direct descriptions of Percy by friends, and especially Percy's self-characterizations, are more pointed and interesting than anything Tolson offers. For example, here is Percy's comment on a profile of him written by Robert Coles:

> I think . . . [Coles] is projecting a good deal of himself, a kind

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> of good-hearted Colesian decency which may apply to him but not exactly to me. I feel a good deal more malevolent, oblique, phony, ironical, and, I hope, more entertaining. . . . What little I accomplish seems to get accomplished through a peculiar dialectic of laziness, malice, and self-centeredness.

The major events of Walker Percy's life are quickly set forth: the depression and suicide of his father; his mother's death two years later; his adoption by a cousin, "Uncle" Will Percy; medical training, contracting TB, and the decision not to practice medicine; marriage; conversion to Catholicism. Uncle Will, the embodiment of Southern culture—defender of traditions, poet, gracious host—was a major influence on Percy. He gave the fifteen-year-old Percy a safe haven when he was orphaned and surrounded him with books and music. In Percy's words: "I might even say that everything I am interested in writing about is a result of the impact of Uncle Will's worldview upon me and what was germinated as a result of the ferment that followed." It was from Uncle Will's beliefs and attitudes about race relations in the South that Percy spent many years disengaging himself.

According to his friend Shelby Foote, it was around the time of Percy's conversion to Roman Catholicism (1947) that his attitudes about race relations began to change. Nine years later Percy's essay, "Stoicism in the South," appeared in *Commonweal*. In this essay Percy plays out his argument with Uncle Will's "benign paternalism," the Stoic view, maintaining that "The concern for fairness in the 'traditional worldview of the upper-class white Southerner' came not from the belief that other people were made in the image of God but from the conviction that doing others an injustice was a breach of personal honor." What Percy had come to understand is that the increasing demands of blacks—"insolence" in the eyes of the Stoics—"is in the Christian scheme the sacred right which must be accorded the individual, whether deemed insolent or not." Characteristically emphasizing the ambiguity of his position, Percy wrote, "[no white Southerner] can write a *j'accuse* without making a *mea culpa*."

The many years Walker Percy spent reading deeply in philosophy and writing essays are thoroughly documented by Jay Tolson. Indeed, they were important and formative years, but as they passed, it became clear that Percy's genius was not as a philosopher. "Nobody reads these things," he said to his wife about his philosophical essays. "I need to put some of the things I'm saying into a novel so that people will read them." He spent the rest of his life writing the novels that are his remarkable legacy. Critics have attempted to place Percy's novels in a tradition. They are recognizably "Southern," "existentialist" (whatever that means, Percy would have said), "philosophical," "comic." But these elements are mixed together into a brew wholly unlike any other.

Jay Tolson identifies one of Percy's preoccupations: "Why is man so sad in the twentieth century?" Alienation and rootlessness; an unfortunate faith that science can solve all problems; in Percy's words,

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the "loss of individuality and . . . identity at the very time when words like 'the dignity of the individual' and 'self-realization' are being heard more frequently than ever," are characteristic themes of his novels. Percy describes the story of a character in one of his unpublished novels as "the progress of the neurotic toward a dreadful grey neutrality from which he cannot escape." Percy is a genius of bleakness. From an unpublished novel, this dialogue between two men in a TB sanitorium:

> "What's the matter, Willy?"
> "I don't know, Scanlon. I'm homesick."
> "How long have you been homesick?"
> "All my life."

Many of Percy's characters are homesick for a home they never had. In analyzing this homesickness, Percy refers to himself as a "pathologist [as indeed he was before he abandoned medicine for literature] . . . with his suspicion that something is wrong." What singles out Percy the pathologist is that he carries out his investigation in the context of "the Judeo-Christian notion that man is more than an organism in an environment, more than an integrated personality, more even than a mature and creative individual, as the phrase goes. He is a wayfarer and a pilgrim." Percy made this remark in his speech accepting the National Book Award for his first published novel, *The Moviegoer*. A few weeks later, in a letter to his literary mentor, Caroline Gordon, he discussed his main problem as a fiction writer:

> Actually I do not consider myself a novelist but a moralist or a propagandist. My spiritual father is Pascal (and/or Kierkegaard). And if I also kneel before the altar of Lawrence and Joyce and Flaubert, it is not because I wish to do what they did, even if I could. What I really want to do is to tell people *what they must do and what they must believe if they want to live.*

IN THE NOVELS Percy combines this moral zeal with the penetrating eye of the pathologist, a wit both sharp and harsh, a dazzlingly accurate ear for dialogue, a zany sense of humor, and a sense of both the dailiness and the apocalyptic possibilities of human life. Jay Tolson calls him a "connoisseur of catastrophes." Though his characters may suffer from anomie, there is nothing lukewarm about the novels themselves. They are weird tales full of passion, venom, disasters, adventures, illnesses mental and physical, philosophical musings and confrontations.

Events, places, and people from Percy's life are frequently recognizable in the novels. Particularly amusing, once you know about Percy's allergies, are his many extravagant descriptions of characters in the throes of reactions to the same substances he was allergic to. In *The Last Gentleman*, "the oaks . . . turned yellow with pollen. . . . He [the protagonist] contracted dreadful hay fever and sat all summer, elbows propped on the conference table, tears running down his cheeks. His nose swelled up like a big white grape and turned violet inside." Later he held "his great baboon's nose in a handkerchief." Most of the time, though, the autobiographical references hold no more than an academic interest, perhaps not enough to justify what is a dogged recital of every ascertainable fact of Percy's outwardly uneventful life.

It could perhaps be maintained that it is impossible to put a person down on paper. After seeing Peter Shaffer's play *Amadeus*, I read many biographies of Mozart. The more I read, the more elusive Mozart the man seemed, and I ended up thinking that the Mozart I know through his music—a brilliant, tender, witty magician who expresses a piercing knowledge of tragedy—is more "real" and more interesting than any of those portraits on paper. Reading Jay Tolson's portrait of Walker Percy has led me to reread his novels. In them I experience a different and a more immediate knowledge of this brilliant and utterly original writer.

BRIEFLY NOTED

PROSPECTS FOR A COMMON MORALITY. Edited by GENE OUTKA and JOHN P. REEDER, JR. *Princeton University Press. 302 pp. $47.50 cloth, $16.95 paper.*

Eleven distinguished ethicists weigh in on the question of whether there is a universal morality, relevant to all cultures and traditions by virtue of the universal structure of reason and conscience in human beings everywhere. The answer to this question, the editors point out, bears significantly on contemporary issues of human rights. Some of the essays in this volume take as their starting point the Enlightenment faith in a common morality accessible to all rational persons—affirming, modifying, or rejecting the Enlightenment model in various ways. Aimed at advanced students in ethics, the readings more than repay the effort. In addition to the editors, who have also written essays, the contributors include Robert Merrihew Adams, Annette Baier, Alan Donagan, Margaret Farley, Alan Gewirth, David Little, Richard Rorty, Jeffrey Stout, and Lee H. Yearley.

THE SCHOCKEN GUIDE TO JEWISH BOOKS: WHERE TO START READING ABOUT JEWISH HISTORY, LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND RELIGION. Edited by BARRY W. HOLTZ. *Schocken. 357. $25.*

The chapters, written by various contributors, provide a wealth of bibliographic references presented in user-friendly essay form, not just as a stark listing. This book will be a most valuable resource for research into any number of Jewish topics: Bible, Talmud, the American Jewish Experience, the Holocaust, Mysticism, Yiddish Literature, and so forth.

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The World Crisis. By Winston S. Churchill. *Scribners. 866 pp. $35.*

Artillery of Words: The Writings of Sir Winston Churchill. By Frederick Woods. *Leo Cooper (London). 184 pp.*

The World Crisis is Churchill's own one-volume condensation of his multivolume history of World War I, its origins, and its aftermath, with the author right at the center of things. (Lord Balfour called it "Winston's brilliant autobiography, disguised as a history of the universe.") The return of this abridged edition, first published in 1931 and out of print now for many years, is most welcome. Churchill's more famous history, his memoirs of *The Second World War,* is but a continuation of *The World Crisis,* the two conflicts constituting a single story, "another Thirty Years' War," as the author himself put it. Impressive in its breadth of vision, color, and drama, this book, with its echoes of Gibbon, is irresistible. Chapter 1, with its biblical title, "The Vials of Wrath," begins as follows: "It was the custom in the palmy days of Queen Victoria for statesmen to expatiate upon the glories of the British Empire, and to rejoice in that protecting Providence which had preserved us through so many dangers and brought us at length into a secure and prosperous age. Little did they know that the worst perils had still to be encountered and that the greatest triumphs were yet to be won." For those who are interested, Churchill's mastery of the seemingly lost art of political rhetoric (in the best sense of the word) is given a lively and incisive treatment in *Artillery of Words: The Writings of Sir Winston Churchill* by Frederick Woods.

American Catholic Arts and Fictions. By Paul Giles. *Cambridge University Press. 547 pp. $65.*

This scholarly study in culture, ideology, and aesthetics underscores the ways in which Catholic sensibilities (typically exercised by ex-Catholics) have powerfully shaped, and are increasingly shaping, American arts and letters. A needed corrective to standard accounts of our culture.

Jesus in Global Contexts. By Priscilla Pope-Levison and John R. Levison. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 232 pp. $17.99.*

A husband and wife team offers a once-over-lightly survey of liberationists, feminists, and others who "do Christology" by construing Jesus according to cultural context. The book would have been more interesting had the authors asked why—in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere—the Jesus that is preached with manifest effect is a Jesus relatively uncomplexified by their anxieties about cultural imperialism.

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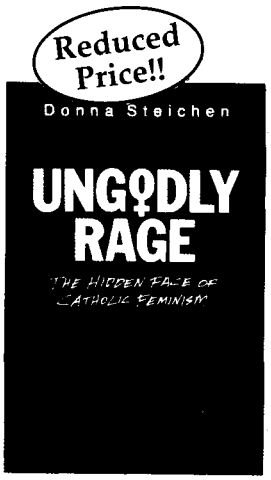

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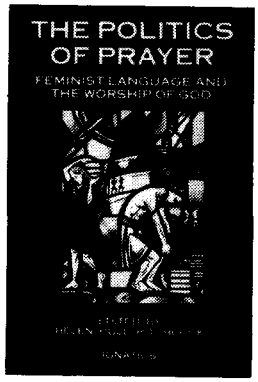

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A DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL TRADITION IN ENGLISH LITERATURE. Edited by DAVID LYLE JEFFREY. *Eerdmans. 960 pp. $80.*

A mammoth new reference work, certain to be a standard and invaluable resource, this "dictionary" contains hundreds of articles on biblical figures, motifs, concepts, quotations, and allusions—both in their scriptural context and as they have been used and understood by English-speaking writers and scholars since the Middle Ages. There are longish, but still concise, essays on such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus, and shorter pieces for quick checks on Abishag, Absalom, Amalakites, Gog and Magog, or Mammon. As well, there are articles on expressions that have worked their way into the fabric of our language and culture—"ashes to ashes," "children of light," "gates of hell," "lion lies down with the lamb," "stranger in a strange land," "what is truth?" and so on. Though the diversity of contributors makes for some unevenness in quality, the overall result is impressive. This is an essential volume for anyone studying the Bible as literature or the Bible's influence on culture and thought.

SALT, LEAVEN, AND LIGHT: THE COMMUNITY CALLED CHURCH. By T. HOWLAND SANKS. *Crossroad. 251 pp. $21.95.*

A professor at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley proffers a "liberating" ecclesiology of the "consciousness" of the Church as "ourselves" and our service to the world.

Grandparents

Thinking of my grandparents,
I stand for a moment on the curb
of a street they often walked,
the old walks cracked and chipped,
and I want to call out to them,
as if they were climbers just ahead
moving across rock and fields of ice,
rubble in the slip of years past.

But if they spoke, would it only
be to say, watch the path, here
a climber fell, and there another,
into the dark heart of the world?

The day of my grandmother's funeral
the boulevards were full of rain,
and grandfather's a year later,
came in deep June, just as the
roses he had planted
forty years before, had thrown
their blossoms across the porch.
By then, though, their friends
were mostly gone and inside
the parlour furniture was worn
and the frame house smelling
of old clothes and old people.

By then too I had heard that great pulse,
closed my eyes, and stepped forward,
right at the icy edge of their certainty.

Ralph St. Louis

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

In response to many inquiries, we are pleased to report that Father Neuhaus continues to recover very satisfactorily from early January's emergency surgery for colon cancer. As this issue goes to press, the usual battery of tests, plus exploration during surgery for the reversal of a temporary colostomy, indicate that there has been no spread of the cancer whatever. He will continue with chemotherapy for some months, thankful that the treatment has not been as debilitating as is often the case. He has been able to work part time since mid-February and we confidently expect that he will be fully engaged in the near future. He requests that we thank the numerous readers who have helped sustain him with messages of concern and, above all, with their prayers. Please continue to join us in remembering him before the Throne of Grace.

-JN

Against Peer Fear

One regularly gets inquiries from aspiring writers eager to be published. So it always has been, and so it should be. Quite possibly, there is right now some aspiring twenty-five-year-old graduate student working on her first major article that we will be pleased to feature in a forthcoming issue. Although we publish only a very small portion of all the manuscripts received, a significant portion of what we do publish arrives unsolicited (over the transom, as they say). Frequently an author will say in his covering letter that, while the present piece may not be ready for prime time, he would appreciate editorial criticism of his efforts. The press of duties tends to make such detailed criticism impossible, but a word or two of general advice might be helpful. As will be seen, the following word is about more than getting published.

Perhaps nothing so prevents good articles from being written, or so spoils good articles that are written, than what we might call peer fear. Of course we are talking chiefly about academic authors (and most of our authors are academics in one way or another). Peer fear results in not writing for a general audience, not even writing to make a clear argument, but, rather, looking over one's shoulder at what colleagues in "the guild" might think. The product, all too often, is not an article but a kind of sprawling annotated bibliography—"as X says, although taking into account Y's emendation as elaborated by P," and so forth. Annotated bibliographies are useful things, as are florilegiums of pertinent opinions on a given subject, but they are not articles.

The trick is to find what is sometimes called one's own voice. Here is the subject, here is why it is important, and this is what I have to say about it that nobody else seems to have said, or at least not to have said in quite this way. What Richard Roarbee and Catherine McUpures and Jacques Dadildo have said on the subject may be very interesting—and, at least obliquely, the author should ordinarily evidence a familiarity with the arguments made by such worthies—but in this office we work on the assumption that people read an article because they hope that *this* author has something important to say to them.

Academic Thought Control

To be sure, it is easy for us to deplore the toll exacted by peer fear, but pity the poor graduate students and junior faculty who have good reason to fear their peers if they are ever to obtain job security and the grand prize of tenure. It is no accident, as our Marxist friends used to say, that many, if not most, of our featured authors are either safely tenured or comfortably removed from the cramped arenas of academic combat. Although it is a source of constant wonder how many of the securely tenured are still intimidated by peer fear. They will privately grumble about the "smelly little orthodoxies" that hold so much of academe in thrall, but they are not

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about to make themselves difficult. Others among senior faculty are preoccupied with their academic specialities, which is fair enough, and yet others take tenure to mean retirement from serious work, which is not fair at all but is part of a system that very few people have a vested interest in challenging.

For academics of both the ensconced and imperiled variety, writing for a journal such as this is usually not a smart career move. The ensconced need not worry, but the junior aspirant has no choice but to worry about what will look good on his resume when his name comes up before the tenure committee at Toetheline U. Items written for and within "the discipline" will receive a sympathetic nod, while it is deemed suspiciously unprofessional to have written for a "general audience," never mind in a journal well known to be annoyingly incorrect. The place to publish is in "scholarly" journals sponsored by the relevant academic guild, and in such journals prospective articles are "refereed" by a company of one's peers.

We don't know about structural engineering and brain surgery, but in the fields more pertinent to our interests—e.g., theology, philosophy, ethics, legal theory, cultural criticism—refereeing is, increasingly, censorship with respect not to competence but to orthodoxy. We have no objection to censorship in principle—after all, editors are inescapably in the censorship business, whether they like to admit it or not—but we do object to material that gives evidence of having been written in sweated anxiety not to push the buttons of angry ideologues who presume to guard what is published "in the field." When it comes to deciding whether to run an article or, for that matter, whether to give it a serious reading, a reliable rule of thumb is to exclude anything that looks like it might have been refereed. There are those scholarly journals for that kind of thing, even if nobody reads them.

That may sound anti-intellectual, but in reality there is nothing more anti-intellectual than the party lines that today dominate so much of academic writing and discourse. Sometimes it is Marxist (yes, Virginia, there are still Marxists), sometimes racialist (advanced in the cause of combatting racism), sometimes feminist (and, if radical, likely lesbian), and, increasingly, sometimes gay. Of course fine scholarship is still being done in many places, and of course specialized journals are necessary for specialized purposes, and, yes, we confess to reading with more than cursory attention the scholarly publications that we must.

But one gets the impression that most academics (at least those who have not confused tenure with retirement) have turned themselves round and round, burrowing ever deeper into the holes of "their" questions, while others eagerly feed their anger on pet resentments such as those marked out by the ideological lines mentioned above. Such is the corruption of the intellectual life in our time, or—and one notes this with relief—the limited part of the intellectual life that is dependent upon the university. Such is the unhappy circumstance of those academics caught in the paralyzing grip of peer fear.

Who Is "Qualified"?

Here at hand is a letter from yet another young professor, this one in a Methodist seminary. Did we know that at his school it has been baldly stated that nobody will get tenure who does not enhance the faculty's "inclusiveness"—meaning nobody who is not female, a person of color, or assertively homosexual? Well, no, we didn't know it about that school, but why should it be different? A distinguished theologian at a prestige university tells us that he advises his white, male doctoral students to have some more practicable backstop if they're thinking of an academic career. At a once distinguished nondenominational seminary, a young black woman was recently appointed associate professor, with tenure. She had not quite completed her doctoral thesis, but the appointments committee was assured that it would be ever so creative.

Raising questions about "qualifications" elicits a knowing sneer from the ideologically perfected. To *be* a woman, or a gay, or a person of color, or a member of any group certifiably marginal is itself qualification more than enough. To those who protest the unfairness and dishonesty of the system, the answer is that now outsiders are getting the advantage of unfair preferences that used to be enjoyed only by insiders. In speaking this way, people apparently do not recognize that they are casting contempt upon the disciplines and institutions of which they are part. It is and always has been a power game, they say, and the spoils go to those who play the game without scruple. Fancy talk about excellence and academic achievement simply disguises the nature of the game. Anyway—and with maximum offense to the racists, sexists, and homophobes who don't like it—we who once claimed to be fighting The System are now in charge of it. And that's the way things are.

A reader might object that this picture of the academy—notably in theology, philosophy, and associated fields—is altogether too bleak. We take no joy in bearing bad news, but the reader is wrong. Admittedly, the lines of fear are drawn differently at some Evangelical Protestant and Catholic institutions. Rather than race, gender, and sexual orientation, the Evangelical lines may be drawn at the question of biblical inerrancy or, at other schools, one may be excluded for having a favorable word to say about those awful fundamentalists. While Catholic scholars who suggest, for example, that this pontificate may actually have something to teach of theological worth definitely do not have a

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brilliant career in prospect. They will not be invited to the right (meaning, usually, left) academic conferences, nor will their papers pass peer review. And if they write intellectually serious books, they will likely be published by alternative presses, although a few might sneak their way on to the lists of publishers of academic respectability. (Among Catholics, alternative presses include Ignatius, which publishes supposed antiques such as de Lubac, von Balthazar, and Karol Wojtyla, a.k.a. John Paul II.)

Cowardice and Conformity

The contemporary academy is, to put it delicately, deeply corrupted by cowardice and conformity, which are mutually reinforcing. This is not to imply that those who dissent from the ideologically correct are consistently possessed of intelligence and talent unjustly spurned. That company has more than its fair share of cranks, and of mediocrities in search of any excuse for being such. But the onus rests on those responsible for the sorry state of higher education. On presidents who chiefly preside over endowments, deans who buy peace at any price, junior faculty who go along to get along, and senior faculty who stopped going anywhere a long time ago.

It is wrongheaded to blame the militant ideologues who are, after all, only doing what they say they are doing, conducting the long march through the institutions, a march that has resulted in triumphs with no end in sight. Having exacted agreement on the dangerously simplified proposition that there is no such thing as objective, value-free search for truth, they are making the most of the license to be outrageously and enragedly partisan in their declared war against civility, fairness, and disinterested inquiry. The consequence is that the academy today is, in very large part, the enemy of the intellectual life.

Of all the actors mentioned, only the junior faculty and graduate students warrant a measure of sympathy. What are they to do when their positions, their futures, their very livelihoods depend upon the ideological passions of petty tyrants? True, they could leave the academy to make an honest living, but some of them believe that they have something like a vocation, and maybe they do. Perhaps the present pestilence is designed to test vocations. The almost inescapable peer fear may lead to trimming at the edges, but the occasional accommodation of cowardice need not be craven. Most people are not cut out to be heroes, and it is understandable that they do not want to be thought difficult. In a highly disagreeable world, there is a good deal to be said for being likeable and liked. As Norfolk proposed to Sir Thomas in Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons*, why not go along for friendship's sake? Thus is cowardice confused with congeniality.

Needed: Resisters

What these young people desperately need is exemplars of resistance, maybe even of courage, within the academy. Their elders who resist will typically be in safe positions, thus diminishing somewhat the glitter of their courage, but they could at some point, in some institutions, form a critical mass that assures their juniors that there just might be life after the defiance of peer fear. Toward that end, we publish a journal, conduct conferences, and sponsor research projects that aim to nurture the intellectual life. It sounds embarrassingly old-fashioned, but we are devoted to inquiry that is intelligent and free, and to an inclusiveness that includes different and sometimes conflicting convictions. That devotion puts this journal and similar enterprises (for there are, thank God, others) in an awkward and sometimes painful relationship to the contemporary academy.

Many years ago, this writer was in a seminar with the late Saul Alinsky, the radical community organizer who founded the Industrial Areas Foundation. "Decide right now," said Alinsky to the gathered seminarians, "whether you want to be a bishop." His point was that those with episcopal ambitions were wasting their time in his course. And so we say, somewhat more gently, to the aspiring young academic who is interested in publishing here: Give careful thought to whether you can live with the prospect of not getting tenure. All the counter-pressures notwithstanding, there are an encouraging number of young scholars who seem prepared to live with that prospect, or at least to risk it. Those who have arrived on the far side of peer fear are, one is inclined to think, more likely to do something worthwhile with the tenure that, despite all, they may one day attain.

FT

Against the Curia

The lead article in the March issue ("Mainline Churches: The Real Reason for Decline") offered evidence that relatively few people who have dropped out of the churches were turned off by the churches' pronouncements on social and political questions. Most of them are not even aware of religious statements and activism in the public arena. It is a great pity. Not because the churches have in recent years contributed much to moral discourse in our political culture, but because they could and should.

The few people who are attentive to the guidance offered by mainstream churches on matters political have, more often than not, discovered that guidance

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to be woefully wrongheaded. Studies are done and statements are issued by the staffs of the church-and-society curia chiefly for the delectation of other members of the curia who are busily lobbying, along with their usually liberal colleagues from other "interest groups," in the halls of government both state and national. Belonging to the special interest group that is in charge of "the moral dimension of public policy" is heady stuff. It also means never having to say you're sorry. Consider, for example, the churches and the collapse of Communism.

As time goes by, we will no doubt learn more and more about what really happened during the Cold War, and about who and what contributed to its ending. Here is a report on a Princeton University conference that brought together former officials of the U.S. and USSR. Top aides to former president Gorbachev claimed that the crucial factor in the demise of the Soviet Union was Ronald Reagan's simultaneous push for a U.S. arms build-up and negotiations for arms reduction. Soviet economic and other difficulties were "compounded by the Reagan Administration's interest in developing a Strategic Defense Initiative anti-missile shield, which Moscow saw as destabilizing because it meant the United States had less to fear from a retaliatory Soviet strike if it struck the Soviet Union first." The report adds, with a nice laconic touch, "The United States speakers at the conference seemed to take 'star wars' less seriously."

Appeasers and Resisters

They have good reason to take star wars less seriously now. At the time, most of them held it in derision. The very term, star wars, was one of intended comic dismissiveness. And, among the Americans who at the time were mockingly contemptuous of star wars, our several religious leaderships in the oldline Protestant and Catholic communities were second to none. In the 1980s the chiefs of mainstream correctness were unanimous in condemning the arms build-up, and star wars in particular, as financially wasteful, militarily futile, and, above all, a threat to "stability." How to say this gently? During the longest and most terrible conflict between political freedom and tyranny, the American establishments, including its religious establishment, were resolutely on the side of appeasing tyranny.

It was called, both by the tyrants and by their apologists in the West, peaceful coexistence. There was one political leader (importantly aided by Margaret Thatcher and a few others) who insisted that Communism was a temporary aberration, that we must not accept the notion of its permanence. As former Secretary of State George Shultz said at Princeton, Reagan might call the Soviet Union "the evil empire," but he also "believed he could turn it into a good empire." Whether Russia turns out to be a good empire, or even an empire, is still to be seen, but the evil empire is ended largely because Reagan and those who supported his intention knew that destabilization was not the threat but the hope.

Apparently receiving less attention at Princeton was the role of another player, John Paul II, who understood that the end of Communism was not only a matter of arms, economics, and politics but, most of all, a matter of the spirit (and the Spirit). The story of religion, and of the Catholic Church in particular, in the events that led up to 1989 is compellingly told in George Weigel's *The Final Revolution* (Oxford). Readers with a memory that extends beyond yesterday's newspaper will recall that the choirmasters of conventional wisdom harshly criticized the Pope as a dangerous "cold warrior," as they also publicly fretted over the distressingly destabilizing effects of the dissident democrats within the captive nations. (After Vaclav Havel had triumphed in Czechoslovakia, he was grandly fêted by the glitterati of New York. A friend observed that there were not all that many in the ballroom who had publicly spoken out in Havel's defense when he was for years imprisoned by the Communist regime. He and his ilk were then viewed by many of the enlightened in the West as dangerously destabilizing.)

It is a nice irony that those religious and other leaders who most adamantly declared themselves to be the enemies of the status quo were the main champions of the status quo in accepting the permanence of Communism. There are many good reasons to ignore the public policy pronouncements of the bureaucracies of mainstream religion, both Protestant and Catholic. On issue after issue, but on no issue more than Communism and what ought to be done about it, they have been dead and, sometimes, deadly wrong. There is no sin in being wrong, but there is something like sin in being wrong with such consistent moral pretension. The unspeakable sadness is that, as our society becomes ever more desperately in need of informed moral discourse, the institutions that might have been expected to provide such discourse have so thoroughly discredited themselves.

The sadness is compounded in the case of the Catholic bishops, precisely because they are so painfully right on questions related to the protection of the powerless, notably on abortion and euthanasia. Where they are right they are ineffectual because where they are wrong they are so obdurate. With admirable individual exceptions, bishops have frittered away their credibility in the endless weaving of a "seamless garment" with gossamer threads of liberal prescription, all intended to compensate for their being embarrassingly out of step on, most significantly, abortion.

The United States Catholic Conference (USCC) in Washington is poignantly eager to let us know that it is not a one-issue operation. One of its top operatives

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recently remarked that not much had changed with the Clinton election. "We disagreed with Reagan and Bush on some issues and agreed with them on others, and the same is true with the Clinton administration." In this view of the moral equivalence of the Church's concerns, the USCC can disagree with Clinton on abortion, the promotion of fetal transplants, and government monopoly on education funds while happily agreeing with the administration on trade policy to Japan, the regulation of the pharmaceutical industry, and the just distribution of cable television franchises. It finally makes little difference. Lose three issues, win three issues, and you come out even.

The mindlessness of the church-and-society apparat now feeds on itself. Whether Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian, it just goes on and on. Budgets are trimmed from time to time but "the mission" continues. The curia speaks for itself and to itself, and the only solution is simply to shut it down, at a great saving of money and of embarrassment to the Christian cause. The maxim that should be followed is: When it is not necessary for the Church to speak, it is necessary for the Church not to speak. And when churches speak, they should speak to the audience that is their distinctive and should be their first concern, their own people. That manifestly is not happening now, and has not been for at least two decades.

Scandalous Ignorance

Which brings us to a scandal that implicates also the conservative bodies of Evangelical Protestantism. There are about sixty million Catholics in the United States. Depending on how one defines Evangelical Protestant, there are fifty-plus million of them. Evangelicals and Catholics, then, constitute about 43 percent of the population. And it is a much more church-going part of the population than is that portion adhering to oldline Protestantism. Now, in the abortion debate of the last quarter-century, both Catholic and Evangelical leaderships have repeatedly declared that the protection of the unborn is their number one public policy concern. A quarter-century later, the evidence is that only 11 percent of Americans are even aware of what existing abortion policy is in this country.

That is, only 11 percent know that, under the *Roe v. Wade* regime, there is absolutely no legal protection for any unborn child; abortion is legal at any time for any reason during the nine months of pregnancy. Keep in mind that a large part of that 11 percent, possibly more than half, is composed of pro-abortionists who like the present regime just fine, and are determined to harden it in place. They have a steep vested interest in keeping the American people ignorant by perpetuating the falsehood that *Roe* makes abortion legal only in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. They are determined to prevent Americans from pondering the fact that nearly half of the 1.6 million abortions per year are repeat abortions and that abortion has become the "contraception of choice" for millions of women who are without men who accept responsibility for their sexual partners or their children.

And yet, abortion is presumably the number one concern of what is taken to be the leadership of two-thirds of religiously affiliated America. Not only have they failed to persuade their people to pro-life conviction, they have failed to communicate the most elementary facts about the question in dispute. There can be no doubt that millions of devout Evangelicals and Catholics, assured by the campaign and its captive media that he had moved to a "moderate" position on abortion, voted for Mr. Clinton in 1992. The failure of these churches, joined by a distinct minority among the oldline, is massive and should be indelibly imprinted on the record.

Six Crusades

In American history, there have been six crusade-like efforts in which religious communities were vitally engaged: the Revolution, abolition of slavery, abolition of polygamy, prohibition of alcohol, civil rights, and now abortion. There are of course many differences between these causes, but one notable difference is that in the earlier efforts the churches were in alliance with important sectors of the several elites of the society. This time, every other major constellation of societal leadership has been arrayed against those seeking to protect the unborn and others who are vulnerable to the choices of those able to choose. The communications media, the foundations, the universities, the oldline churches—all have been overwhelmingly pro-abortion. Measured by its philanthropies and financial support for cultural and educational programs, the business community must also be termed dominantly pro-abortion in its influence. (We do not mention that part of the business community that is the multimillion dollar abortion industry.) The Catholic Church since the beginning and Evangelical Protestantism since the late 1970s have been the only major institutional bases for the pro-life cause. All things considered, it is a wonder and a reason for gratitude that there still is a vibrant pro-life movement in 1993.

There is a second significant difference from earlier crusades. Whatever one thinks of the merits of their goals or means, in abolition, prohibition, and civil rights, the churches involved were singleminded. They knew what they meant when they said that they had a number one issue in the public arena. They communicated effectively with constituencies that made their convictions felt in the polling booth. They were not hobbled by the church-and-society bureaucracies that afflict Catholicism and most of Protestantism today. They did not have

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offices and commissions promoting a dozen or three dozen "number one" issues, depending on which interest group in their constituencies is squealing loudest at the moment. They had leaders. With very few exceptions, that cannot be said today.

So much for this month's fusillade against the official redoubts of those who, in the name of religion, claim to be attending to "the moral dimension" of public policy. Yes, we have said most of this before. And, God giving the opportunity, we will almost certainly say it again. If the future is marked by a greater modicum of sanity, people will look back in astonishment at a time in American life when the churches—especially Catholics and Evangelicals—so blew their chance to make the vital connections between biblical faith, moral discourse, and public policy. Excuses can be found. Of course it is intimidating to be confronted by such a formidable array of opposition, but, apart from the morally incompetent, people choose to be intimidated. And of course there are innumerable Christians possessed of a painful yearning to be accepted by the hierophants of "mainstream" culture, but such have plagued the Christian cause from its beginning. They have not, at least not usually, been permitted to define the Church's mission in the world.

And finally, of course the struggle is not over, and will not be until Our Lord returns in glory. It is true, as Eliot wrote, "For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business." But in their great responsibility to infuse our common life with a sense of the source, the end, and the dignity of the human person, the churches have hardly tried. In what they have tried to do—weaving a shapeless garment of evasive consistency and trying to become players of consequence in Caesar's political games—they have shown themselves to be foolish and inept. One would shy from such a harsh conclusion were one not convinced that we all face another judgment much more severe.

FT

BUTCHERED LOGIC

You have probably read something about "The Butcher of Avenue A," a Dr. Abu Hayat who did abortions on the Lower East Side of New York, and is now convicted of doing them very shoddily. He is facing up to twenty years in jail. Rosa Rodriguez, eight months pregnant, came in for an abortion that was badly botched. Leaving the clinic with the abortion incomplete, Ms. Rodriguez changed her mind and the next day delivered a girl child at a hospital. Ana Rosa is now eighteen months old and is described by the press as a bright, active child "who loves to eat croissants and play with her sister Jenny." The problem is that she has no right arm, it having been sliced off during the abortion process by Dr. Hayat.

The media had a field day with the Butcher of Avenue A. At the trial, more than thirty women came forward with stories of abuse similar to that of Rosa Rodriguez, although in other cases the babies did not survive the medical atrocities perpetrated by Hayat. The entire episode is a wondrous parable of our times.

Had Ana Rodriguez not survived, and had she not been missing an arm, we would have heard nothing about the Butcher of Avenue A, or the hundreds of abortionists who similarly exploit women in trouble. The pro-choice activists are determined to prevent any regulation of abortion clinics, even the minimal record-keeping mandated by Pennsylvania and upheld in last year's *Casey* decision by the Supreme Court. Oddly enough, and despite *Roe*, New York still has on the books a law prohibiting abortions after "viability." In reality, almost 4,000 abortions per year are performed in the state on children beyond the twentieth week. Nonetheless, Hayat was tried and convicted under that law, plus several others related to medical malpractice.

It does not require the mythical man from Mars to have critical distance enough to see the oddity in all this. Had Hayat killed Ana, he would have collected his fee and continued to be honored with the title of medical doctor with no questions asked. Pro-lifers have made much of the point that his legal and public relations problem was not in being a butcher but in being an inefficient butcher. His job, like the job of every abortionist, is to be a butcher, but he did it very poorly. Of course one might draw analogies with, for example, capital punishment and war. There would justifiably be a great outcry were an executioner to be as callous and incompetent as Hayat, or were soldiers in battle to inflict egregious suffering on those they kill. These tasks, which most might deem to be justified by necessity, are to be done quickly, cleanly, and, as much as possible, without upsetting public sensibilities.

As is detailed in, for instance, James Davison Hunter's "What Americans Really Think About Abortion" (FT, June/July 1992), most people recognize that abortion is killing another human being. The debate is over whether or when that killing is justified. President Clinton's argument in a recent "town meeting" that the debate is over when "the soul enters the body" was undoubtedly news to most of his listeners. That argument has not been made by recognized theologians or philosophers since the dawn of modern medicine. It is a desperate sop for the conscience of a Baptist who, one suspects, or at least hopes, has had uneasy moments about his consistent, and very successful, pandering to the pro-

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abortion lobby.

The story of the Butcher of Avenue A is one among many that highlight the popular ambivalence about abortion. The same people who gush over cute little Ana Rosa Rodriguez are outraged at Hayat for not having killed her the way he was supposed to. Even the mother is quoted by a local paper as saying, "I hope my story will help lead the way for women to have safe abortions if they elect to have one." One may be forgiven for suspecting that an uneducated, poor, Puerto Rican girl who goes to a cut-rate abortionist on the Lower East Side never said that, unless the reporter simply gave her the formula to repeat. In the same breath, Rosa Rodriguez thanks God for saving the life of her beautiful daughter.

Clinton has repeatedly said that he wants to make abortion "safe, legal, and rare." It is never safe for the child, and it is frequently not safe for the woman, in large part because pro-abortionists resist any regulation that might be a toehold to government "interference with reproductive freedom." And, of course, abortion is anything but rare. One of the more imaginative twists in Clinton's logic is that abortion can be made more rare by codifying the abortion liberty in the Freedom of Choice Act and by providing public funding for abortions. To appreciate the muddleheadedness, guilt, and denial that produce the contradictions in American thinking about abortion perhaps it would take the mythical man from Mars after all.

FT

Temptations of Power

With the national referendum on gay lifestyles that President Clinton inadvertently invited by his first days of fumbling the question of gays in the military, with the firing of Joseph Fernandez as public school head in New York, and with the rehabilitation of the St. Patrick's Day parade, the leaders of the gay-lesbian movement acknowledge that they have experienced severe setbacks, or, some say, a momentary stall in their march to victory. The march, in order to prevail, must trample rather roughly upon popular sentiment. On the promotion of homosexuality (called the promotion of "tolerance") in public schools, City Council Speaker Peter Vallone remarked, "It has nothing to do with politics. . . . People would die over this issue: You don't mess with my children and I won't mess with yours." On the question of homosexuals in the military, somebody, perhaps it was General Colin Powell, succinctly summarized the issue this way: Soldiers don't like to shower with soldiers who like to shower with soldiers.

The Fernandez and St. Patrick's developments crucially involved the Catholic Church in New York. When, in 1984, John Cardinal O'Connor came to New York, he said that he hoped that the archbishop's residence would no longer be called, as it was under Cardinal Spellman and other predecessors, "the power house." And indeed, while 43 percent of the people residing in New York claim to be Catholic, it has seemed in recent years that the influence of the Church has been in decline. It is understandable that the media have expressed alarm at recent evidence that the Church is still able to move the city on some questions that bring moral judgment to the crunch point. The newspapers and television have suggested that there is particular cause to worry because Catholics have formed what they call an "unprecedented political alliance" with black and Hispanic Protestant churches. Their worry is not without foundation.

In New York and in the nation a pattern seems to be developing. On a specific issue, the Catholic Church stakes out a position and holds the line and is then later joined by conservative Protestant bodies. That was the case in the abortion battle, and it has been the case with homosexual activism in the public schools of New York (remember also that the "New York model" was being adopted by major school systems throughout the country). Of course the pattern of initiative is different in some parts of the country. Baptists, for instance, are sometimes called "the Catholic Church of the South and Southwest." But in New York, with its inordinate influence on the general culture, the Catholic Church is the Catholic Church. And there is no doubt that it is led by Cardinal O'Connor.

As the remark about the "power house" suggests, O'Connor has evidenced a certain ambivalence, some would say coyness, about the exercise of public influence. The public perception of O'Connor, in turn, is produced by the media's ambivalence about him, about Catholic influence, and about the role of religion in "the secular city." On the one hand, it is proclaimed that religion is ineffectual and in steep decline. On the other, the media assiduously highlight O'Connor's slightest references to public affairs. He is not nearly so political a creature as he is portrayed to be. As a general rule, he has been very careful in choosing the politically related subjects on which he comments in public. Also as a general rule, any passing reference to, for instance, crime in the city—even in the context of a sermon on trusting God's protection—will produce blazing headlines such as CARDINAL ATTACKS MAYOR ON CRIME. The press well understands that the Cardinal and the real or alleged power of the Catholic Church are good copy. Certainly they are the very public bête noire of "the progressive party," led in New York by the gay and lesbian alliance, that aspires to exercising a political monopoly. (Experienced politicians estimate

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that 15 to 20 percent of the New York vote is effectively controlled by that alliance. That, combined with what he counts on in black votes, is the basis of David Dinkins' hope for reelection this year.)

When religion is freely exercised in expressing moral judgment and encouraging moral debate in public, it inevitably is accused of playing power politics. Admittedly, many churches, the Catholic Church included, have at times indulged the temptation to be just another political player. Drawing the line between public responsiblity and playing political games is not easy, but O'Connor is about as good at it as anybody around. Responding to recent criticisms that the Church is just another power broker in New York, the Cardinal wrote in his weekly column: "That's a caricature, in my view, but if for the Church to exercise her right and duty of questioning society is for the Church to be branded as just another power broker, so be it. If this is the price the Church must pay to say, 'What you are doing is wrong,' then the Church must pay that price. Please God, the Church will never ask herself how many votes she can deliver before saying whatever she must say or doing whatever she must do." In our judgment, that gets it just about right.

FT

STARTING FIGHTS

"As some tell it, religion wasn't a big issue in this comfortable, ethnically diverse Buffalo suburb until last fall. Then the school board unveiled a new policy to help children get along bettter." So begins a *New York Times* story about Williamsville, N.Y. And wouldn't you know it, the program to get along better, like the New York City program to teach "tolerance" of homosexuality, soon had everybody, including the children, going for the jugular. The brilliant Williamsville idea, hardly original, was to pretend that the majority of people who live there are not Christians, and therefore to put down any "privileged" references to Christianity.

"Handel's 'Messiah' could be performed as long as there was no audience sing-along and the music of other religions was mixed in for balance," reports the *Times*. A little Hari Krishna chant, perhaps, just before "I know that my Redeemer liveth." We are further informed, "The North High School's annual Christmas Concert was renamed the Winter Concert, but it still featured a Christmas tree and a visit by Santa Claus." Well, as long as they keep the essentials of Christmas.

What madness this all is, and it is happening all across the country. And what just madness it provokes from ordinary folk who know perfectly well that almost all of them are Christians, or at least claim to be so, and the only way to "get along better" with fellow Christians and others is to draw on, not deny, the religious and moral teachings that they embrace. Tolerance is not a free-standing virtue. Why should an overwhelming majority of Christians be tolerant of Jews, Hindus, Muslims, or atheists? Because otherwise the minorities will be unhappy? "Tough," is one answer to that. Because otherwise, given the nature of this democracy, society will be thrown into civil commotion? That's somewhat more serious, but majorities have been known to dispense with democratic niceties.

The reason Christians are tolerant is not because this is a pluralistic society. This is a pluralistic society because most Christians are tolerant. And they are tolerant for Christian reasons—because they believe that everyone is a child of God, that consciences are not to be coerced, and even terribly wrong opinions are to be tolerated out of respect for the human dignity of those who hold them. Christians have not always understood the imperatives of tolerance, and some on the Christian fringes still don't. But what the ACLU, the National Education Association, and their like must some day learn is that the only available reservoir of public morality in this society is the dominant ethos, and that dominant ethos is, however confusedly, Christian.

Absent that understanding, any program to help people get along better is sure to set them to fighting. Admittedly, some people think that is a big plus. Says Margaret Mendrykowski, chairman of the Williamsville program, "I think the issues were there. Any time we unearth issues of prejudice and misunderstanding and work on them, it's positive." The alternative view is that there are very sensible reasons for keeping prejudice and misunderstanding well buried. It is sometimes called repression, without which no civilized order can survive. When nastiness comes to the surface, it must be addressed in a morally explicit way, but it is never wise to go poking around in search of potential nastiness. Not recognizing that, the progressive campaign in America is bent on turning public schools and other institutions into anger factories of civil discontent.

FT

MASONS AS BAPTIST "SOUL BROTHERS"

In Europe, notably in Italy, there are fevered conspiracy theories about the grand schemes of

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Freemasonry (theories that frequently link Masons and "the Jews"). One Catholic magazine, published in English as *30 Days*, carries regular features on which prelates in the Roman curia are or are not Masons. In the U.S., on the other hand, it's pretty hard to get excited about the sinister influence of Masons. Some reports suggest that the organization is almost moribund. Certainly its public profile is close to nil. In the twelve years that we've lived here, nobody has seen anybody go in or out of the large Masonic building located just around the corner. Of course that may be an indication of just how sneaky those Masons are, but we doubt it.

In any event, here's James M. Dunn, head of the liberal Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, waxing enthusiastic about Masons as the saviors of "religious freedom" (i.e., an extreme doctrine of church-state separationism). We hope the folks at *30 Days* don't get hold of Dunn's article. He lauds C. Fred Klienknect, Sovereign Grand Commander of Scottish Rite Masons, for warning against Catholic and Evangelical support for parental choice in education. "Now there is a soul brother in the struggle for authentic religious liberty," declares Dunn. But Dunn's concern is for more than maintaining the establishment of the separationist faith. He is at war with the Southern Baptist Convention, which has in recent years withdrawn from his Joint Committee. The Southern Baptists may be in the process of formally deciding that Masonic membership is incompatible with being a Baptist minister.

Dunn fulminates, "Have we fallen upon a day in which a climate of suspicion, distrust, and ignorance allows heresy hunts and thinly veiled bigotry to sway a mob-like band of fundamentalists?" It is hard to say whether *30 Days* or the Joint Committee is the more hysterical when it comes to the subject of Masonry. The Catholic Church and a number of Protestant churches have long held that the problem with Masonry is that it is a false religion. They say that Masonic creeds and rituals, the secrecy of which has been blown for more than a century, propose a belief system at sharpest variance with anything that might be deemed orthodox Christianity. Of course, Christians who are Masons tend to downplay the conflict, but some churches are inclined to take creeds rather seriously. The factor of religious belief does not seem to figure in Mr. Dunn's argument. Any friend of extreme separationism is a "soul brother" to James Dunn. It does appear, however, that whatever support the Baptist Joint Committee gets from Masons will probably not make up for the loss of support from Baptists.

FT

Crossing the Line

"One day many years ago, a young idealistic doctor in a small mining town came face to face with unexpected disaster. The local mine had collapsed, trapping some miners for hours before rescue teams could reach them. As the doctor walked among the mangled victims of the disaster, wondering how he could help, one of the miners who was in excruciating pain grabbed his white jacket and screamed: 'Doctor, I beg you, let me go quickly! I can't stand it! You can't do anything for me—it's too late. Doctor, I want to die—do you hear me?—I want to die!'

"The poor doctor had to force the man's fingers apart to loosen his grip from the cloth of his jacket. Finally the man expired, leaving the young doctor pale and shaken.

"In a recent issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, highly respected physicians cited emotional stories very much like this one—and without very much reasoned analysis, assumed that assisted suicide is our only answer to such patients and then started working out the ground rules."

The foregoing is from a paper by Richard M. Doerflinger of the Catholic Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities delivered to a meeting of the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association. The young doctor in question was Karl Brandt, and the story is drawn from his testimony at the Nuremberg trials where he explained why he agreed to begin a program of euthanasia for the incurably ill at the request of Chancellor Adolf Hitler. Doerflinger continues: "In the progressive corruption of the German euthanasia program, one event in 1940 stands out. The program to end the lives of the incurably ill had been going on under Dr. Brandt's direction for nine months, and a Nazi official suggested that it was time to begin selecting candidates based on their ability to work. Dr. Brandt, who still thought of the program as a humanitarian one, strongly objected to this rating of lives by their social worth to others—but he was overruled. He found he no longer had any compelling arguments as to why this shift in policy should not be made. He himself had already crossed the truly important boundary—the one between healing and killing."

Is Mr. Doerflinger being alarmist? We think not. Of course the U.S. 1993 is not Germany 1933, and of course the distinguished doctors who promote "assisted suicides" are not Nazis, being motivated by nothing other than compassion. And of course a dozen other distinctions. But, once the line between healing and killing has been crossed, the question is not whether we will kill but whom we will kill and for what reasons. There are no *publicly* compelling arguments with which to resist the inherent expandability of the new permission. Of course

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religious scruples may stand in the way, but the courts have made abundantly clear that religious scruples have no public standing. Anyway, if you have qualms about it, nobody is compelling you actually to do the lethal deed. This, too, is a matter of choice. And isn't choice what America is all about?

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Once again, the ACLU rushed to the defense of the Republic by backing Robert Sherman, the village atheist of Zion, Illinois, who sued to get "God Reigns" removed from the municipal seal. And, once again, the atheists won in court. So the city council held a contest for a new seal, which now bears the motto "In God We Trust." The Supreme Court has allowed that on the U.S. currency, so Zion figures it can probably get away with it too. Columnist Stephen Chapman, however, thinks "the elders of Zion" are being too clever by half. It is a Pyrrhic victory, says he. Doesn't the city council know, he asks, that the Court allows "In God We Trust" because it is deemed to be devoid of religious meaning? The phrase is exempt from scrutiny, said Justice William Brennan, "chiefly because [it has] lost, through rote repetition, any significant religious content." The same goes, according to Brennan, for "under God" in the pledge of allegiance. Chapman writes: "But if the Court took official religious messages like this seriously, it would have little choice but to rule them out of bounds. Some of the faithful apparently would rather have the government endorse ersatz religion than no religion at all." But why should Brennan's obtuse dicta make In God We Trust "ersatz religion"? Apparently the people of Zion think it means exactly what it says and was well worth fighting for. Now if we can get the Court to declare that the Bible is a harmless collection of fairy tales, perhaps it can be studied again in public schools. One hopes the day will come when people will look back in incredulity upon a period in American history when the beliefs of the overwhelming majority of the people could find public expression only when the courts ruled that Americans do not really believe what they insist they do believe.

■ Two worthies were recently inducted into the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Vaclav Havel, President of the new Czech Republic. (The Academy has fifty French members and twelve associate foreign members.) What they had to say in their inaugural addresses was remarkably similar. Discussing the Church's relationship to society, Ratzinger invoked the wisdom of Origen: "Christ does not triumph over anyone without that person desiring it himself. He triumphs only by convincing." Ratzinger continued: "It is in conformity with the nature of the Church that she be separate from the State and that her faith not be imposed by the State, but rest on freely acquired convictions. . . . It also belongs to the Church to know she is responsible for everything and that she cannot limit herself to herself. She must, with all the liberty that is proper to her, address herself to the liberty of all, in such a way that moral forces of history remain the forces of the present and that this evidence of the values without which common freedom is not possible arises ever anew." Havel reflected on his political experience and turned also to the theme of "moral forces" that transcend rational control. "I also noted with dread," Havel said, "that my impatience as regards the re-establishment of democracy had something of the Communist in it. Or, more generally, something of the rationalist, the Unity of the Enlightenment thinkers. I had wanted to make history advance in the same way a child pulls on a plant to make it grow more quickly. . . . One cannot fool a plant any more than one can fool history. But one can water it every day, with understanding, and humility certainly, but also with love."

■ "If 'Nature' bears a Godlike face," writes Anglican priest John K. Williams, "that face is the face of humanity. Which is just what one would expect if human beings truly are made in the *imago Dei*, the image of God." This is from Williams' critique of the philosophers of "deep ecology," published in *Religion & Liberty*, which is put out by the very lively Acton Institute, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. More from Williams: "Nature is not divine. It is the creation of God, not a god or a goddess. When treated as divine, the superficially benign face of nature is revealed for what it is. Invariably, human sacrifice is demanded. The worshipers of Ashtaroth and Baal did it. The Aztecs did it. The devotees of the eerie nature religion informing Nazism did it. Not surprisingly, the 'deep ecologists' recommend it.

"I quote from an essay appearing in *Earthbound: New Introductory Readings in Environmental Ethics* (Random House, 1984). 'Massive human diebacks would be good. It is our duty to cause them. It is our species' duty, relative to the whole, to eliminate 90 percent of our numbers.' Or consider the following, taken from a J. Baird Callicott's *In Defense of the Land Ethic* (State University of New York Press, 1989): 'If it is not only morally permissible, but, from the point of view of the land ethic, morally required, that members of certain species be abandoned to predation . . . or even culled, how can we consistently

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exempt ourselves from a similar draconian regime? We too are only "plain members of citizens" of the biotic community.'

"We Christians know that the worship of Nature—the worship of Ashtaroth and of Baal—is idolatry. We also know that the worship of Mammon, an ugly little godling who would have us believe that the creation of wealth, an undoubted good, is the supreme or only good and that the acquisition of such wealth can satisfy our deepest yearnings, is also idolatry. Thus my final word is not economic but theological. I believe that sound economics points us in the direction we must walk if feasible answers to the environmental problems of our age are to be found. More importantly, however, I affirm that sound theology is an imperative if we are to avoid the veritable holocaust extreme environmentalists would unleash upon this planet, a planet that belongs to God yet which the Holy One has entrusted to our fallible care."

■ Events spin out in a most unpredictable manner. That's perfectly predictable, you might say, and you're right. But did you ever think you might support a project led by Bella (The Hat) Abzug? As best we understand it, we rather like her Women's Environmental and Development Organization. It opposes U.S. funding for United Nations and Planned Parenthood programs that would impose population control on the third world. Abzug favors a "voluntary reproductive health approach with women at its center." Of course that undoubtedly includes support for abortion and other unacceptable measures, but it does recognize, as is amply supported by the data, that only when people are educated, economically secure, and free to make responsible decisions for themselves is the much-hyped "population bomb" defused. We hope the article in *America* where we read about Ms. Abzug's organization is accurate. Otherwise, we would be deprived of the pleasure of indulging our irenic nature by saying something nice about a most improbable person. (Having known her for many years, we have no doubt that Bella Abzug takes it as a compliment to be called an improbable person.)

■ Much of the good done by some Protestant international agencies and much of the harm done by organizations such as the World Council of Churches are funded by the EKD, the Evangelical Church in Germany. The EKD has sometimes seemed to possess a bottomless pot of gold because the German government collects a surcharge on income tax and passes the proceeds on to the church. People can opt out of the system if they wish and a minority has done so in the past, but Protestant pastors and theologians have often argued that the willingness of the great majority to pay the church tax is a sign that Germany is not so secular as factors such as church attendance might suggest. A new survey, however, indicates that 72 percent of the populace declares itself against the tax (81 percent in the former East Germany), believing that the church would be more responsive to people's needs if it were based upon a more voluntary system. Of course the Catholic Church in Germany also benefits from the current tax system and is a major source of support for the Holy See. Catholics, however, have been less inclined to see the tax surcharge as a sign of Christian devotion in lieu of behavior such as attendance at Mass. (Incidentally, according to Lutheran World Information, 56 percent of the population of the nations belonging to the European Community are Catholic. Which should be taken about as seriously as the claim that the eight million people of Sweden are Lutheran.)

■ Rabbi Joseph Gelberman used to be Orthodox and now he is Reform, of sorts. Once a year in his Interfaith Temple in Manhattan, on Valentine's Day, he does marriages free. All year round he declares that he is prepared to marry anyone—Jew, Christian, Hindu, gay, straight, believer, nonbeliever. The very genial rabbi says, "I'm not here to please God. I'm here to please God's people." As Aaron explained to Moses about the calf.

■ Some movements take a very long time in dying. But that is what has finally happened with the nineteenth-century Oxford Movement, according to Fr. Ian Kerr of Oxford University, the author of a recent biography of John Henry Newman. Reflecting on the significance of the recent vote to ordain women to the presbyterate, Kerr writes: "For, in spite of the boasted comprehensiveness of Anglicanism, Anglo-Catholics, Evangelicals, and liberals hold incompatible views of what Christianity is, and therefore what the Church is. . . . [The vote was] a resounding defeat for the Anglo-Catholic party which, if it even survives, is now completely marginalized. This is surely what Newman would see so clearly; that last week's vote spelt the end of the Oxford Movement.

"Like Newman's departure, the Synod decision is really a triumph for the liberals. Without the Anglo-Catholics, will the conservative Evangelicals be able to resist the total liberalization of the Church of England? More than 100 years ago Newman feared that the Church of England would become so 'radically liberalized . . . as to become a simple enemy of the truth,' as it seemed 'only a matter of time how long the Anglican Church retains any part of the Faith.' "

■ Writing in his new newsletter, *Insight*, commentator Russell Shaw says that Catholics have come upon hard times in terms of their influence in national politics. "With the advent of the new administration and a new Congress, the Catholic Church's capacity to influence national policy is at its lowest ebb since the 1920s," he writes. With other

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commentators, Shaw notes the remarkable dearth of high-profile Catholics among Clinton appointees. The few there are, such as Budget Director Leon Panetta, are gung-ho pro-choice and generally unresponsive to the Church's leadership on other moral questions. Of 535 members of Congress, 140 are Catholics, but the 91 Democrats are overwhelmingly pro-choice, along with the Catholic Speaker of the House, Thomas Foley, and Senate Majority Leader, George Mitchell. Three of the six women senators are pro-choice Catholics—Mikulski of Maryland, Braun of Illinois, and Murray of Washington. More dismal, says Shaw, is the fact that Catholics voted pretty much like the general electorate: 44 percent for Clinton, 36 percent for Bush, and 20 percent Perot. Even if one allows that the election was decided on economic issues, Shaw concludes, "these results show large numbers of Catholics ignoring the Church for practical purposes." Or, more accurately, for political purposes.

■ Vicarious atonement is not usually the subject of the *New York Times* culture sections, but here is a "thought piece" (as the journalistic conceit has it) on Michael Jackson. He has explained, apparently to the intense interest of millions of Americans, why his skin is getting whiter, why animals and crucifixes get mixed up in his video couplings, and how very lonely was his childhood. Think-piece writer Ann Powers concludes: "Offering viewers . . . reason for his inexplicable ways, Mr. Jackson reassures and allows them to escape blame. His defects, then, are someone else's responsibility; he's a victim of one person, not of each of us who has called him a freak, destroyed his privacy, and worshiped him as people have always worshiped their sacrificial lambs." So there, Michael Jackson is dying for your sins. The article is accompanied by a photo of Jackson with arms outstretched as on a cross. If the *Times* is to be believed, we may perhaps anticipate that in future Jackson productions the crucifix will become more than a gimmick, although featuring a different savior. Strange are the religions for which intelligent people will fall when they abandon true religion.

■ A sophisticated time that has seen through the delusions of romantic love is left with the detritus of erotic knowledge. Thus the hero and heroine of A. S.

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Byatt's often captivating novel, *Possession*: "Things had changed between them. . . . They were children of a time and culture that mistrusted love, 'in love,' romantic love, romance *in toto*, and which nevertheless in revenge proliferated sexual language, linguistic sexuality, analysis, dissection, deconstruction, exposure. They were theoretically knowing; they knew about phallocracy and penisneid, punctuation, puncturing and penetration, about polymorphous and polysemous perversity, orality, good and bad breasts, clitoral tumescence, vesicle persecution, the fluids, the solids, the metaphors for these, the systems of desire and damage, infantile greed and oppression and transgression, the iconography of the cervix and the imagery of the expending and contracting Body, desired, attacked, consumed, feared." The author adds, "They took to silence." The beneficiaries, it would seem, of truly comprehensive sex education.

■ In a not unthoughtful cover article on fetal transplants and related phenomena, *Newsweek* concludes: "Clearly, society should foster research to alleviate human suffering. Just as clearly, it must also protect itself against the callous use of human material, even in its early stages of development. Even though human fetuses have been thrust into a legal limbo, they still elicit feelings of protection and respect. The question society still has not resolved is: how much?" The conclusion perfectly reflects the pitiful stirrings of the vestiges of a morality once secured by biblical faith. There is no answer to the question, except by consulting one's "feelings"—feelings which are almost unlimited in their malleability. Why should fetuses elicit any feelings of protection and respect unless they are something more than "human material" in early development? Unless they are one of us, and we are not our own? Put the unborn into moral and legal limbo (an interesting degradation of theological terminology) and such feelings are nothing more than our irrational inhibitions. The unborn cannot reasonably elicit protection and respect unless they warrant protection and respect. Our political culture has been mostly successful in squelching the suspicion that the status of the unborn, and of others who cannot speak or act for themselves, rests on inconvenient rights and duties. The *Newsweek* conclusion, not atypical in current discussions, is the twitching of a lingering moral suspicion, the source of which has been forgotten.

■ Thanks but no thanks. A reader asks us to respond in detail to a review of *Doing Well and Doing Good* by a Llewellyn H. Rockwell in an Illinois-based magazine called *Chronicles*. Suffice it that the reviewer, who appears to be some kind of libertarian, suggests that we have an incorrigible sympathy for socialism. It is in fact among the purposes of the book to counter such sympathies. We are sorry to have failed in making this clear to Mr. Rockwell, but are pleased that he seems to be alone among reviewers in his nonrecognition of the book's argument. He is right to inveigh against the blurb on the book's dustjacket, but he, or certainly the editor of *Chronicles*, should have known that we have publicly and strongly dissociated ourselves from the jacket hype perpetrated by the publisher without our knowledge (see "An Embarrassed Disclaimer," The Public Square, December 1992). Other than that, the review is notable chiefly for Mr. Rockwell's impressive animus against those whom he calls neoconservatives, among whose number he counts your scribe. We are, from time to time, called worse things.

■ *Solitude* (Ballantine Books, paperback), by psychotherapist Anthony Storr, is a persuasive argument that our culture misleads people in putting altogether too much emphasis upon happiness through personal relationships, and not enough on the satisfactions to be found in work and solitary creativity. Storr engagingly rambles through history gathering examples of sundry lives of great achievement that were lived chiefly in solitude. The emphasis, as might be expected, is on writers, artists, philosophers, and musicians. Among those discussed is P. G. Wodehouse, creator of Jeeves, who published some ninety-six books in his lifetime. Interviewed by *Paris Review* when he was ninety-one years old, Wodehouse was asked when he first began to write. He responded, "I know I was writing stories when I was five. I don't know what I did before that. Just loafed I suppose."

Sources: Princeton conference reported in *New York Times*, March 1, 1993. Story of Dr. Abu Hayat, *National Right to Life News*, February 23, 1993. Cardinal O'Connor on the Church's role as "power broker," *Catholic New York*, February 18, 1993. David Carlin on "Abortion, Gay Rights, and the Social Contract" in *America*, February 27, 1993. On school "Christmas" program in Williamsville, N.Y., *New York Times*, February 26, 1993. Richard Doerflinger remarks from an unpublished paper.

While We're At It: Stephen Chapman on Zion, Illinois case in *Conservative Chronicle*, December 23, 1992. James Dunn on Masons in *Report from the Capital*, November-December 1992. On Bella Abzug and the Women's Environmental and Development Organization, David Toolan in *America*, March 6, 1993. On church tax in Germany, *Lutheran World Information*, March 1993. Rabbi Gelberman quoted in *New York Times*, February 13, 1993. Russell Shaw on Catholics and national policy, *Insight*, February 3, 1993. Ann Powers on Michael Jackson, *New York Times*, February 21, 1993. On fetal transplants, *Newsweek*, February 22, 1993.

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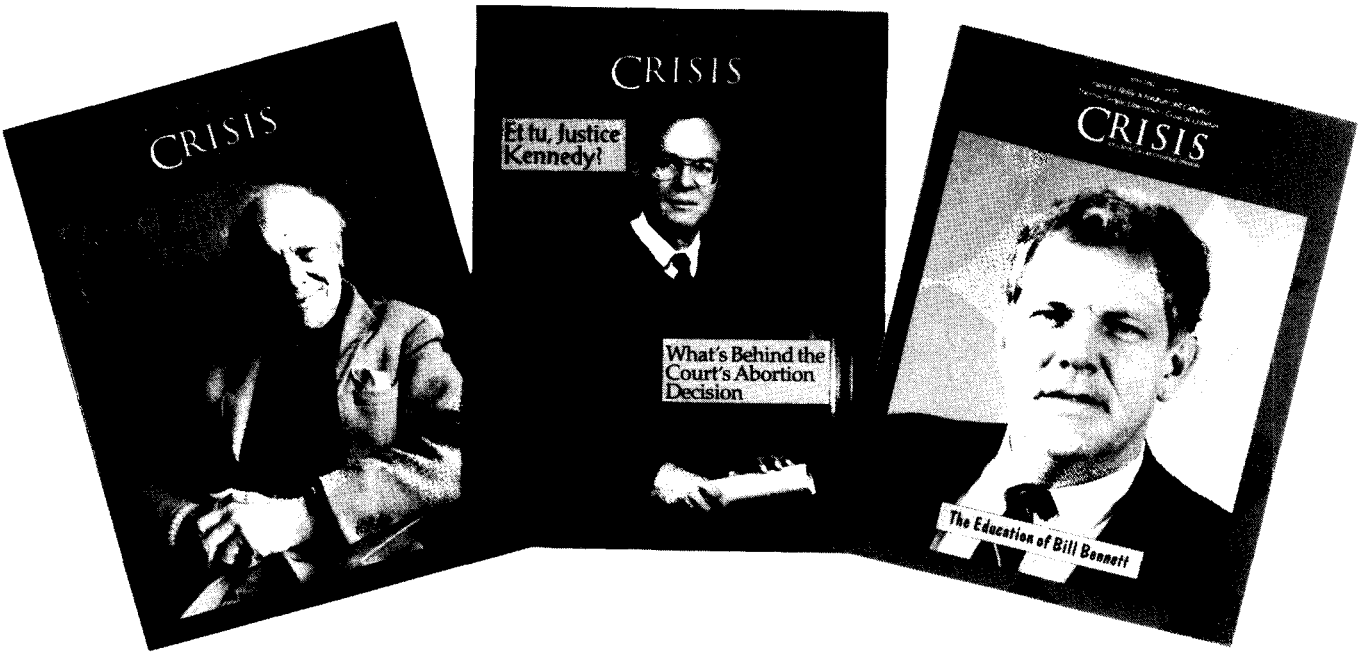

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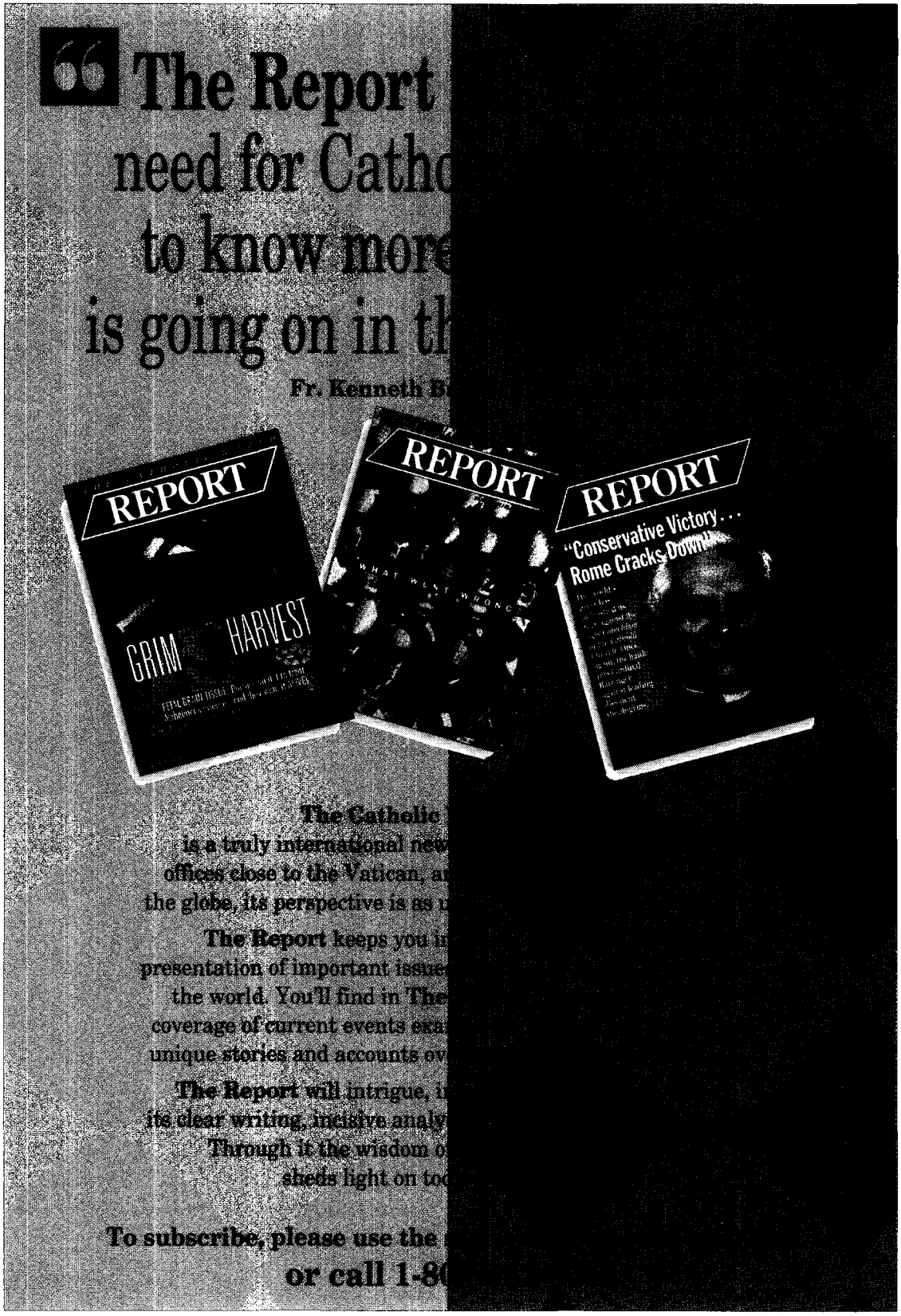

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